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IN THE RING.

A NOVEL.

BY

LILY TINSLEY,

AUTHOR OF "A WOMAN'S REVENGE," "THE WRECKER'S DAUGHTER,"
"THE LION QUEEN," "SHADOWS," "AT THE CROSS ROADS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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IN THE RING.



CHAPTER I.

ODD FOLKS.

BUT in spite of his good old landlady's comforting assurance, the nine-oils—pronounced, according to tradition, “iles”—did not prove so effective in our hero's case as the recital promised, or, indeed, as was to be wished.

The morning following his mishap saw Jerry again “no good,” as he phrased it; indeed, such signs did his injured foot give forth of his retaining for some time to come Daystar's voluntary proffered mark of affection that, for once, her faith shaken in her sovereign remedy, his worthy landlady advocated seeing a doctor. Jerry at first laughed at the idea, and declared a few days' rest would be all the medicine he required; but after Mr

Petman had paid him a visit, not of condolence, but to ascertain how matters were, and sworn roundly by way of sympathy, accompanying the same with a warning, that if the clown did not put in an appearance at the show on the morrow he should have to stop his screw, which was rather hard lines, considering the circumstances of the case, which, however, he utterly refused to take into consideration, and as the pain rather increased than abated, Jerry very reluctantly gave permission to let a certain "Squills" in the neighbourhood try his hand upon him.

The result of the visit of the man of physic was to reduce our hero to a state of despondency which he had never known before.

The verdict to which he listened was to him the most terrible that could have been pronounced.

The kick had severely injured some of the small bones of the foot, and unless it was allowed complete rest for some time to come, the doctor would not say what might be the consequences.

Quaking for fear, our hero asked how long "some time" might mean in doctors' parlance.

The answer he received completely destroyed all his hopes.

"Three weeks!" he ejaculated in despair, "I don't believe I shall live half that time. You'll have to chain me down, doctor, or I shall be breaking out into a double hand-over-hand."

"If you do," was the prompt reply, "you'd better order in a pair of crutches, for they'll be what you'll want for the rest of your days."

With this dire threat the doctor departed, with the usual promise to call at some no very distant date, and finding there was no help for it, Jerry proceeded to resign himself to his fate with the best grace he could assume.

The news of his "doom," as he called it, soon got abroad, and one by one most of the company dropped in to offer their sympathy, and in more than one case, more substantial proofs of good-fellowship.

Installed in his landlady's best front parlour, our wounded hero was constrained to believe that, in spite of all her protestations of pity, the good lady was nevertheless not ungrateful to the occasion for allowing her to heap favours upon one of her husband's beloved profession; installed, I say, in his landlady's best front parlour, enthroned in truly imposing state in a huge leathern arm-chair, his "sick member," as he called it, carefully disposed on a stool in front of him, in order, no doubt, to keep him in remembrance of the fact that he was "invalided," lest in a moment of forgetfulness he might be tempted to vent his feelings in a double somersault, our hero during the intervals of the performances at the gardens held a *levée*, the dignity of which caused the landlady to completely pulverise her domestic, who imagined she must have taken leave of her senses, by donning her best high-day and holiday garb—a massively-trimmed black silk dress and lace cap, which had never seen light since "poor, dear Parkins's death."

"Really," as Jerry remarked in private to the aforesaid "slavey," who, having a sweetheart in a Methodist chapel pew-opener, had been taught to look upon anything approaching to theatres with something short of abhorrence, and who was with great difficulty induced to remove from the sideboards, brackets, etc., the dust of ages which had accumulated upon them, because of the presence of our wounded hero amongst them, "really," said Jerry, unaware of the meaning of the looks of askance which the pew-opener's sweetheart cast upon him during the said operation, "really one would think the old lady looked upon me as a special-sent messenger of Providence to provide her with a little enjoyment."

At this "heathenish" remark—*vide* the pew-opener—that worthy's young lady was, as she put it, so "took aback" that she allowed the model of a Chinese god to slip from her fingers into the fender, where it was smashed, if not to the proverbial thousand pieces, at least enough to place it beyond repair even by the renowned 81-ton cement; the scandalised maid-of-all-work literally fleeing from the chamber in horror and not a little dread of the wrath which would be poured on her devoted head—why "devoted," I scarcely know, but I believe it is the proper term to apply in such a case, so for the sake of logic, we will suppose it was devotion to her Methodist lover and his sentiments; not as my reader may be tempted to imagine, to a faculty which maids-of-all-work seem to possess of breaking, cracking,

and otherwise damaging the most precious relics and heirlooms possessed by their unfortunate mistresses.

Jerry vented his astonishment at the "slavey's" abrupt exit by a long whistle, but utterly failed to ascertain the cause; then proceeded to rejoice over the downfall of the said little Chinese god, to which hideous but unoffending ornament he had taken a most violent and deeply-rooted antipathy, which, owing to his projected confinement within arm's reach of it, bode, I fear, but little good to the grinning idol.

However, thankful that he had been spared hurting his kind lady's feelings by himself making away with this, her most valued heirloom, as she called it, the same having been presented to "dear dead Parkins" by his boss as a token of regard for his valued services, Jerry sympathised most heartily with the old woman when he found her, instead of rowing the "slavey," wiping away a few regretful tears on the corner of her best black silk apron, so attached had she been to the shattered idol, with much more just cause than frequently exists for the blind devotion which mortals bestow on similar unworthy objects when they meet with a like tragic fate.

But Jerry did not moralise thus.

The sight of the old woman's tears moved him at once.

He called himself all sorts of hard names for ever having entertained an evil thought of the ruined idol, declared most emphatically that it was the

most beautiful ornament he had ever set eyes on, and instantly reversed his judgment when the good lady despondingly declared that it was the memories attached to it that made her value it; she knew it was ugly, but she liked ugly things.

At this Jerry put on his most tragic air, and swore a solemn oath that he knew she liked ugly things, or why had she taken such a fancy to him—he was ugly enough in all conscience;—she had treated him like a son, and he was sure he looked on her as a mother, etc.

This last piece of sentiment completely restored the old woman's equanimity. She forgot her grief in violently protesting that her lodger was by no means to be compared with her broken idol; indeed, Jerry was at a loss to make out whether she was anxious to claim for it a perfect monopoly of hideousness, or whether he was really the Adonis she would have made him out. Adonis! I doubt if the lady had ever heard of this sort of god, the mention of which, I verily believe, would have resulted in nothing short of a sky-blue fit to the pious young female who had brought about the destruction of the Chinese idol.

To my reader it may seem something bordering on profanity to so much as mention the name in connection with Jerry, who, had he been aware of it, might have remarked that comparisons are odious, which in this case they certainly were.

However, although our hero stoutly refused to accept even his landlady's repeated assurance that he was, when in his Sunday best, by no means

bad-looking, indeed far from being the ugliest lodger she had let her two-pair-back to, he was by no means unimpressed by her kindness in making the best of all things—namely, the loss of her pet ornament, his own want of good looks, and the accident which had thrown him on her tender mercies, which, to say the truth, were well deserving of the name. In his inmost heart—I do not know whether, like all possessors of secret opinions, this judgment was shared by his outermost organ, the distinction “inmost” implying that he laid claim to more than one palpitating machine—in his inmost heart, I say, Jerry pronounced her a brick, and emphasised his opinion when he was once more himself again by searching the town over for another Chinese idol, determined to purchase it, no matter what the price ; and, more heroic resolve still, no matter if twice as ugly, if possible, than its predecessor.

Fortunately, however, for his pocket and also for his powers of endurance, when the god of hideousness came under his vision, as it would have done during his stay with Mrs Parkins, such a thing as he sought was not to be had for love or money ; and though he saw what would to his mind have been an excellent equivalent in a Dutch doll of English manufacture which, deprived of its arms and legs and subjected to a brief sojourn in the coal-cellar, might easily have passed for a substitute, he could hardly screw up his courage to the point of entering the shop to make the desired purchase, fearful lest he should

be taken for a family man. Jerry was bashful on this point, while visions of being handed his purchase *sans* paper, and having to convey it home thus, and at any moment while thus laden stumble upon one of his colleagues, alarmed him to such a degree that he gave up the idea.

The one, however, which next entered his head, and which he immediately carried out, was hardly so ingenious, though certainly more expensive.

It consisted in purchasing for his obliging landlady a pretty little Dutch clock, a far more useful and ornamental way of evincing his gratitude, and one which delighted "poor dear Parkins's" widow to such an extent, that she instantly raked up for the thousandth time that much disturbed man, and compared his many virtues with those of our hero.

This comparison so much affected her that she quite broke down, and sobbed over the little Dutch clock as though it were the grave of her worthy husband ; but after a few moments' enjoyment of the luxury of tears, she dried her tears, and sat eyeing her lodger with a gaze which had something in it more than admiration, a something which Jerry could by no means understand—I am not sure that he was not somewhat alarmed by it, though why he hardly knew.

It is useless for my reader to ask me to describe that look. I doubt if quill or steel pen, even the fluent "J," could describe it, or if mortal paint brush could have justly portrayed it.

All I will say is that it was a look of question-

ing, though for knowledge of what Jerry could not tell; but unconsciously he retreated before it, going back step by step until he was at least fourteen paces from it. But it was useless for him to think that by so doing he would escape what followed.

The good lady regarded him fixedly for several moments, then suddenly gave expression in words the look which had so puzzled him.

It seemed that during his daily sojourn in her little front parlour he had made a far greater impression upon this motherly soul than he had calculated—an impression which, no doubt, his timely present as a proof of his gratitude and generosity, two of the most prominent traits in poor dear Parkins's sainted character, had greatly increased, an impression which it seemed Mrs Parkins, in spite of the memory of the dear departed, was unable to resist.

In plain words, such as she used, she laid herself and all her earthly goods and chattels—the well-kept lodging-house which paid its way and left something over to lay by for a rainy day, and fifty pounds already saved for that occasion, at the feet of her favoured lodger, who, it seemed, had completely stolen away the remainder of her heart—and that no despicable portion, as Jerry knew well—that she had not deposited in her first husband's grave.

The fact that her action might in any way seem to slight this ex-groom's memory troubled her at first not a little, but after the first shyness she

warmed to her subject, and unhesitatingly, and certainly most pressing, offered our hero that same gentleman's vacant place—in short, asked him to be her husband.

Surely never before was there such an absurd situation ; certainly never before had Jerry, in all his comic experiences both in and out of the ring—the latter many times more really funny than any at which the public laughed so consumedly—been placed in one to beat it.

There sat the old lady in the old leathern arm-chair, which Jerry called his stool of penitence, her portly figure in its neat brown gown, clean apron and showy cap. Of late the pious domestic had noticed that “missus” had taken to wearing her best things in the morning, instead of reserving them, as every decent Christian should, for Sunday wear, a practice which the Methodist pew-opener denounced with great solemnity and many shakes of the head, which said plainly enough that he feared Mrs Parkins was in every way likely to follow her husband to that unmentionable place to which he (the pew-opener, not any higher authority) consigned the souls of all connected with that lost body, the profession, and at the same time a practice which to any member of the male sex less endued with a sense of his own personal attractions, not to say vanity, might have construed into, well, a prologue to what followed.

The good lady was, as I have said, seated in her leathern arm-chair—I should have said, on

the extreme edge of that seat—her fat hands planted firmly on each knee, her motherly bosom heaving with emotion, and her expansive countenance illuminated by a smile, the benignity of which defies description. Opposite to her, but at the distance already described, his back firmly planted against the wall, his feet apart, his body bent slightly forward, his hands, as usual, diving into the depths of his pockets, his dress somewhat disarranged, especially his necktie, as was usual when he was excited, his shoulders slightly raised, his head thrown well back, his hair sticking up in a most expressive, but at the same time unbecoming, manner on his forehead, his mouth puckered up into distinct preparations for a whistle of unusual shrillness, stood our hero, with his eyes—well, I think it was a good thing for Jerry that they were so small that Mrs Parkins was unable to define the expression in them. Though by trade a merry fellow, and—which perhaps accounts for the fact—in private life well known for his good temper and affability, yet never before had Jerry felt such a violent inclination to explode with laughter as at the time of which I write.

His eyes fairly danced with merriment, and it was only by resolutely keeping his lips in a whistling position that he was able at all to keep his feelings under control.

Never before had the sense of the ludicrous struck him so forcibly ; the contrast between him and his “wooper,” as he secretly designated Mrs Parkins, was so plainly marked, their positions

so unsuggestive of the turn the conversation had taken—a fact which might have deterred any less earnest “lover” than the landlady—her manner so impressive and spontaneous, his own astonishment so perfectly uncontrollable, the whole affair, Dutch clock and all, so utterly absurd, that in my opinion Jerry deserved a medal from the Humane Society for so determinedly restraining giving vent to his feelings.

No, he bound himself down by most awful threats not to laugh, pronouncing on his head most dire punishment if he indulged in the impulse. If he died of suffocation in the effort, he would not allow himself so far to forget what was due to his own dignity and Mrs Parkins’s feelings, as to give way to his mirth.

For, ludicrous as it at first appeared, like most comic scenes, there was yet a touch in it of the pathetic, to a sense of which Jerry’s mind was never dull.

It needed but one glance at Mrs Parkins’s tear-stained, expressive countenance to know that her part, at least, in the scene, was played in earnest. There was no mistaking the fact that she was as sincere in this strange offer as in the other kindnesses which she had heaped on her lodger’s head. Yes, she certainly “meant it,” as Jerry said to himself, and not for worlds would he have let her suspect by so much as a smile that he was in any way amused.

Laugh he certainly would have done but for the remembrance of that pathetic touch in the

midst of all the absurdity. As it was, the memory of the old woman's motherly kindness, doubly appreciated because he was so unused to such from fair hands; her lonely life since poor dear Parkins was taken from her, leaving her to the tender mercies of lodgers who were not all possessed of Jerry's sense of gratitude, with no chick nor child to cheer her in the ruddy old age which would soon be upon her; above all, her evident goodness of heart, which made her wish to do something for one whose honesty and cheery ways had of late so enlivened the lodging-house, held every smile even in check.

This was all the more apparent when, on his stammering out a few words, in which he expressed his sense of the obligation she wished to confer upon him, but at the same time set forth as well as he was able his inability to comply with her request, she accepted his assurance that it could not be, sorrowfully, but with calm resignation, smoothed down her apron with great care, told Jerry not to be bothered about her, no doubt she was a silly old woman, but to be sure in the morning to put on the new socks she had made for him. These socks he ever afterwards regarded with something like awe, not knowing how much of Mrs Parkins's second love-story might have been knitted in with the "three purl—one plain" of which they were composed, while the lady herself straightway set an example to all rejected lovers by cooking and, in company with the object of her affections, partaking of such a meal of tripe

and onions as made the noses of the less-favoured lodgers turn up with envy. The matter, however, did not end there.

Hearing from the Methodist pew-opener's young woman that the favour which was shown to him had led to the comforts of the other occupants of the widow's furnished apartments being somewhat less carefully attended to than of yore, consequent upon which the good lady had fallen in the esteem of several single gentlemen, who might, perhaps, be led to forsake her hospitable roof, Jerry easily gained permission to make the best parlour the scene of a nice little supper in honour of his departure, to which everyone in the house was invited.

This supper was a complete success, and completely restored the equanimity of the single gentlemen—for it was impossible to be anything but on good terms with a landlady who was evidently in such high favour with such an eminent person as the well-known circus clown, whose ability to provide not only a "jolly good supper," but to entertain his guests so well, completely atoned for all past favours which he had received. It was truly a sight to see Mrs Parkins, resplendent in the black silk, done up for the occasion with a large quantity of bead trimming, and wearing a cap the like of which had never been seen before, and the gorgeousness of which had the effect upon the pious domestic to inspire her with prophecy, under the spirit of which she predicted all sorts of evils which were to befall

the wearer of the pagoda-like edifice of lace, flowers, and ribbons, beneath which Mrs Parkins's expansive countenance beamed with so much radiance on the guests of her favourite lodger, at whose right hand she was placed, and made the recipient of attentions such as she had never received even from "poor, dear, dead Parkins."

The entertainment was pronounced a great success, and so far increased the landlady's esteem as to make her once more revert to her original project for making her lodger a permanency.

It was on the morning following the supper already spoken of, when Jerry stood for the last time in the little front parlour to say good-bye to her.

She bore up all right while she was fussing after his luggage, which she had considerably augmented by the secretion of various little returns for the Dutch clock, in the shape of more than one article of wearing apparel which she herself had made, to say nothing of a carefully-packed hamper, into which she had emptied the resources of her store cupboard, such dainties as might have kept a good-sized family provided for several weeks; but when at length she could no longer put off the fatal moment, nor refuse to see that Jerry held out his hand to shake hers, even then it seemed impossible for her to say good-bye, and all of a sudden Jerry became seriously alarmed lest he was in for a repetition of the proposal of a few days before, for the way the old woman sobbed was truly heartrending. Jerry

was not sure that he should be able to go through the scene a second time with due solemnity, and entertained serious thoughts as to whether it was not his duty as an Englishman and the recipient of so much golden affection to accept the kindly offer, and make Mrs Parkins—Mrs Jerry.

His reflections, however, which began to grow somewhat painful, owing to an honesty of purpose and a desire to do his duty, were cut short by the object of them referring certainly to her proposal, but in a manner very different from what he had expected.

It seemed that the interest with which she regarded our hero, while losing nothing in its intensity, had undergone a complete transformation, and with an astonishment which hardly exceeded that of the former occasion, he found the widow's affections, house, and money saved, once more at his feet, to be his this time, not by union with marriage bonds, but by the acceptance of his adoption by the landlady. In lieu of a husband, the old woman would have adopted her lover as a son.

Ludicrous as had seemed the former project, this following it was doubly so. Give vent to his merriment, Jerry felt he must but for the timely arrival of the milkman, and during the time that the old woman was issuing orders for half a pint extra to be taken, he managed not only to control his features, but also to determine upon a course of action.

Long association with the ring, as a rule, ren-

dered it easy for him to say the right thing at the right moment while in public, but in private he found himself rather short of words.

However, as before, his rejection of her offer was firm, if none too fluently uttered, but he did something which was better than any amount of excuses, although he afterwards was at a loss to know how he had screwed up his courage to the sticking point. He first said quietly how much he thanked her for her kindness in this and all other matters, but he couldn't think of letting her be to him anything than the best friend he had ever had in the world, whom he would never cease to remember with pleasure and gratitude, and in proof of which he would never miss an opportunity of paying her a visit, but he would not hear of there being any ceremony in the matter which might give him, if in future years he chose to turn lazy (only he knew how remote was the possibility), a hold upon her generosity—and to bring this medley of fun and truth to an end, he put one arm round the old woman's make-believe of a neck, and, bending down, kissed her heartily on the cheek.

This salute was returned with interest, with many a "God bless you, my boy," and then, freeing himself from the motherly arms which held him, Jerry seized bag and other luggage, and made his escape down the street, looking back, however, when he reached the corner, to wave a last salute to the portly figure of Mrs Parkins, which, as she waved a very limp handkerchief,

completely blocked up the doorway, to the extreme annoyance of her second floor, who was just off to catch a train.

Thus Jerry and his landlady parted to meet again, and to this day the little Dutch clock may be seen in the latter's parlour.

CHAPTER II.

IN SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.

BUT in relating my hero's experiences with his landlady, of which sisterhood she *was*, I fear, the exception, not the rule, I have, I find, been led somewhat ahead of my story. What occurred meanwhile, although it is in fact the connecting link between the past and the future of those with whom this tale has to do, the detailing of it will not take very long.

I have said that during Jerry's enforced sojourn in Mrs Parkins's front parlour he had many visitors, and among these Lizette Hartzmann and Madame Petite. Through the medium of Smith, the former had at length become acquainted with the true state of the case and her share in it, and, full of contrition and far more gratitude than was necessary under the circumstances, cut short her usual chat in the ante-room on the morning following the accident, to pay her visit to her old friend.

Jerry always remembered the visit with feel-

ings of mixed pleasure and pain, owing to his naturally volatile nature, the former predominating.

It was just after the episode of the Chinese idol, when the widow had somewhat recovered from her sorrow at its destruction, that the Methodist domestic announced that a young lady would like to know how he was—hoped greatly that he was better, and sent her bitterest sorrow that he did it through her.

Even allowing for the retentive memory of general servants, Jerry fancied he recognised the wording of one whose knowledge of our vulgar—very vulgar in many respects—tongue was rather limited.

He therefore requested Mrs Parkins in person to take his answer, the time which it took him to compose the same, and the rather obscure meaning of it when it was composed, considerably puzzling his messenger, who, finding her interview with the inquirer on the doorstep rather unsatisfactory, at length, under her motherly chaperonage, ushered Lizette, for she it was, into Jerry's presence.

He was a little taken aback at the honour thus conferred upon him, and, in spite of Mrs Parkins's protests, seconded with much impressment by his visitor, insisted upon rising to greet this visitor.

Lizette, however, soon reduced him to order, and in a few minutes was seated in the low rocking-chair, while Mrs Parkins occupied the sofa, discussing his injury with an earnestness and

dignity which rendered her English doubly difficult to understand, and made Jerry indulge in a great deal of merriment at her expense, not all quite unaffected.

Lizette treated his "fun-making," as she called it, with great dignity, excusing it on account of his being an invalid, and completely winning the old landlady's heart by her pretty speech and ways.

It was wonderful to see how her presence seemed to brighten up the little room, with its prim order, old-fashioned furniture, and not too cheery outlook into the side street, for, even though, as Jerry owned to himself, there was no reason now for him to pinch and screw, he did not rush into extravagances in the way of lodgings, for which economy he was well repaid, as we have seen, by the pleasant company into which he fell, which even more luxurious rooms could not have gained him.

But comfortable as he confessed himself to be, if, and I have little doubt such was the case, there had been one thing wanting, it was the sunshine of some one's presence whom he loved — that sunshine which seemed suddenly to have found its way into the room with the little fancy-rider's entrance.

And while fully aware that he had lost his power to claim the pleasure, Jerry tried to retain possession of the brightness as long as he was able.

In spite of the no slight pain which in defiance

of the nine-oils and various other soothing ointments recommended by the doctor his foot was causing him, he laid himself out to be extra lively, almost blessing the accident which gave him the privilege he would otherwise have been denied, and once he found himself, quite innocently, exaggerating even the doctor's opinion of his injury, in order that he might hear again Lizette express her gratitude in her queerly-worded sentences, and also because a sudden hope had crept into his mind that perhaps she might be induced to pay another similar visit during his disablement, as she called it. This wish was by no means abated when, in response to several loud whispers from Mrs Parkins, in which the words "best teapot," "greengage jam," "muffins," were distinctly audible, Jane, the domestic already spoken of, made her appearance with all necessaries for a grand tea, of which Lizette could not refuse to partake.

So there they were, he, she, and Mrs Parkins, who as yet did not entertain in her bosom any deeper feeling for our hero than that honest admiration with which she regarded anything and everything in any way related to the profession of her poor dear, dead husband, sitting as cosy as possible round the little three-legged tea-table in the front parlour, drinking tea out of Mrs Parkins's best cups, and just as cosy as though, as Jerry remarked, they had been a young couple come to pay a visit to their mother-in-law.

He made this remark with an air of great joviality when, having piled on to Lizette's plate

the last of the muffins, he contented himself with bread-and-butter, protesting that he preferred it—a fact which any one who has ever tasted the Winkleberry muffins will either put down to a great want of taste, or disbelieve it altogether, remembering that Lizette had a moment before expressed a sentiment the very reverse.

“Like a young couple visiting their mother-in-law!”

The moment he had uttered this apparently harmless sentiment—one which he used with great success during some rather rough fun in the ring—he became suddenly crimson, only by a miracle saving his teacup from emptying its contents into Mrs Parkins’s lap, and succeeding in letting his bread-and-butter slip through his fingers to the floor.

“Bah!” said Lizette, laughing gaily. “It is as well I do not wish you as my husband, since you are so clumsy as to drop your bread. It,” with an inquiring shrug of her shoulders, “it has gone, where is the butter, downwards, of course.”

Mentally comparing the piece of bread to the luck which he had let slip in just such another way, Jerry covered his awkwardness by some laughing rejoinder, the fun coming from his lips, not his heart, and stooped to pick up the subject of his comparison.

But in his own mind he heard his half-stifled longing for what could not be, rebuked by that laughing voice which, all unconscious of the sting it contained, said, with all the *naïveté* which made the

bitterness none the less great for being so hidden, "It is as well I do not wish you as my husband."

Here was an answer to his unspoken thought in words which, though uttered in jest, foregone actions proved none the less sincere.

Jerry told himself in the hard, dry way he had lately got into of censuring his actions and thoughts, that the correction served him very well right, a conclusion which did not tend to increase his liveliness of manner during the meal.

Even the fact that the piece of bread, which in fun which his own bitterness had turned into mockery, Lizette had decided was sure to have fallen butter-side downwards, was, in fact, buttered on both sides, did not inspire him with any idea but that her excitement at entertaining two such celebrities of the town as the fancy-rider and himself had led Mrs Parkins to commit such a piece of extravagance, not even pausing to think whether Fate, holding high festival also in honour of two deserving souls, might not be guilty of a like proceeding.

But even though such a trivial incident made Jerry a little preoccupied for some time after the tea things were cleared, so concerned did Lizette become lest his foot should be the cause of his change of manner that he had perforce to exert himself to please and amuse her until she rose to go.

After tea she stationed herself at the window, and while chatting away in her childlike manner to Mrs Parkins, her eyes wandered every now and

then down the length of the street in a way which rather puzzled Jerry, clear-sighted as he had been to see through circumstances which were far more dense than this.

He did not, however, have long to wonder, for by-and-by, as the time grew near for the evening performance, Lizette rose, and thanking Mrs Parkins for her kindness, donned her pretty white straw hat and little cashmere fichu, and said her good-bye rather hurriedly.

Jerry hobbled to the window, obviously to see her pass down the steps, but in reality to ascertain if some suspicions he had were well founded. Yes, as he thought, Lizette had been watching for some one who had no doubt promised to come and meet her with the flowers he had asked to be allowed to get her. Yes, there down the street went the little figure in the silver-grey dress, the soft folds of which had so lately touched Jerry's hand—Lizette's step gay and buoyant as one who goes to meet pleasure—speeding, hurrying along to meet the young fellow who sauntered along to meet her.

He sees Lizette's step grow even quicker, the two hands meet, and the one face look up with a wordless welcome such as he would have given worlds to have earned, at the handsome one above, and then side by side the two pass down the hot dusty street, no doubt forgetting all else but that they are in each other's company—forgetting all else but their own happiness in their love.

But ere they had gone many paces together,

suddenly a third figure overtook them—a tall girl in a well-made summer costume of some light cotton material, blossoming all over with flowers like an arbour in a pleasure garden, a costume such as the weather permitted, well made, if that means displaying a fine figure to its best advantage with the help of as many frills, flutings, and gatherings as could be crowded into one body and skirt, while lace and flowing ribbons, the latter of a rather bright colour, were equally freely distributed. A light straw hat of most becoming shape, trimmed with lace and feathers, long tan gloves, and a parasol also heavily trimmed with cheap lace, completed an *ensemble* which, if a little startling, was certainly well carried off by the wearer.

This gorgeous apparition of lace, feathers, ribbons, and flowers, without seeming to hurry, overtook the two lovers, passed them as though she did not recognise them, then turned and with a well-acted gesture of surprise, considering the little farce already described, greeted the ring-master with evident *empressement*, his companion with much less so, and as she too was bound to the gardens, the trio turned in that direction together.

No doubt both Lizette and her lover would gladly have dispensed with her company, for instead of the anticipated *tête-à-tête*, the new arrival had managed to place herself between them, and seeming to totally ignore the presence of one of them, addressed herself with mighty vivacity to

the other. Was it an omen of the future that while the gaily-clad manager's daughter, for she it was, talked and laughed gaily with the handsome young ring-master in the sunlight, the little fancy-rider, whose sober grey dress seemed suddenly to have become quakerish and plain in the extreme, walked along silent, and not moody, but somewhat preoccupied in the shade?

Was it, too, an omen that that night when Lizette entered the ante-room for once her lover was not waiting for her, that when he did come and bring her the flowers he had promised, instead of being the honeysuckle she had asked for they were scentless daffodils?

Ah, Jerry, Jerry, you may be quick in reading signs which foretell evil to yourself, but why are you so blind to that which throws a cloud over a life which is dearer to you than your own, a cloud which may one day spread over the whole horizon, obscuring the brightness of the once clear sky, till all at once the storm bursts and falls with appalling violence? Ah, you Jerry, as the days go by so slowly in your prison, when you would give all you possess to be able to drown your trouble by work, you may comfort yourself with the thought that it might be the one you love best in the world lying here in the loneliness and pain, that you have saved her all this. How are you to know that in the days to come she whom you saved from Day-star's upraised foot, paying yourself the penalty of a relentless will, will say to you in deeds if not in words, that it would have been doing better

service to her to have let her be stricken down by those iron hoofs dead at your feet, than left her to have her life slowly trodden out of her by the no less cruel feet of a foe from which even your love could not save her?

CHAPTER III.

A FACE AT THE WINDOW.

JERRY'S doom, as he called it, had been imprisonment for three weeks, if not more, and it was during this time that the change to which I have referred took place.

How it happened it would be hard to say—even Jerry himself never exactly knew—although there was perhaps some one else who could have detailed it all had she chosen.

He had not been slow to detect any change in himself, but he was very long discovering that matters were not going on in that little world in which he was most interested exactly as he at first imagined.

Finding it useless in the condition in which his foot continued—the blow from Daystar's hoof having in fact resulted in a more severe injury than he had thought at first—and to think of retarding its complete recovery by disobedience to the doctor's orders being out of the question, he gave himself up to his fate with as good a grace as he could assume.

And now again I fancy I see my reader slightly elevating that feature which enjoys by this action the monopoly of expressing contempt, for once more my hero seems little deserving of the name.

Here he was, invalided in a most lame manner (this is not meant for a wooden-legged witticism). Instead of having gallantly saved the girl he loved from death, or at the least from being a cripple for the rest of her days at the risk of his own life—this in the ring where he could have earned the applause of the admiring spectators—he had at the very suggestion of danger been so alarmed that he had merely dragged her out of the way in a very clumsy manner; and for his trouble received a nasty knock, to make a merit of which was like making a fuss about nothing.

Now a neat little blow on the forehead, just enough to leave a scar of honourable—not to say disfiguring—dimensions, or a broken leg, would have been something worth talking about; while a broken arm would have thrown a glamour of helplessness and romance over him, as it has done over countless heroes before, which from being unusual in his case would have been doubly interesting and delightful.

Then, too, this form of injury does not necessitate imprisonment—nay, directly affords opportunities for many delicate little attentions from the rescued one.

But to be placed in such an interesting situation as this was not Jerry's luck, and he had to make up his mind to swallow his feelings, which,

however, would now and then find vent in a few hard words—for he was by no means a saint—and to while away the hours of his captivity as best he could. This at first he did not find so very difficult. Mrs Parkins never seemed to weary of chatting to him, and he had no lack of visitors.

There was, however, as we know, one among these latter for whom he looked with more eagerness than the rest.

Nor did he look in vain.

Every day he managed to catch a glimpse of her, and when this pleasure was over he seemed to find the hours drag by very slowly.

First of all, owing to Mrs Parkins's kind hospitality, which set the invalid's mind at rest about the propriety of the thing, she, meaning of course Lizette, would come in at all sorts of times to give an account of the day's show—a recital which at the same time cheered and depressed her hearer. It was astonishing how much the young clown's heart was in his work.

The landlady was for some time at a loss to know how it was that, no matter how docile her patient was during the other portions of the day, from about half-past two to four in the afternoon and eight to half-past nine in the evening, a big slice of the twelve hours, he was sure to be most restless, and sometimes just a little irritable.

Truth to tell, much as he tried to convince himself to the contrary, our hero never found the time of his "turn" approaching without experiencing a longing to be at his work. Even though

it was "only playing the fool," it was a harmless sort of duty which many people perform without the laudable object of gaining their daily bread. He never would have believed that he could so greatly miss going through his old tricks—monotonous as the routine often became when in practice—while he fairly laughed at himself for recalling with so much pleasure the applause and loud approbation which as a rule greeted his appearance.

Yet try and disguise the fact as he would he had a daily-increasing "hankering," as he called it, after the show and all that appertained to it, and looked forward with great eagerness to the time when he should be able to take his place in it once more.

Till then the hours he was forced to spend in unwonted inactivity were a sad drag upon him, till one day, in a lucky moment, Mrs Parkins, who unreservedly placed the entire resources of her household at his command for his amusement, discovered among some old curiosities a book entitled, "A Few Card Tricks, for Beginners," a present from some past lodger.

This she presented to Jerry with much delight, which was, however, rather damped when he said it was not in his line at all.

Nevertheless, in spite of this assertion, made just after one of Lizette's visits, which perhaps accounted for his despondency, later on in the day, for want of something better to do, he amused himself by turning over the leaves of the despised

book, and was surprised to find how easy many of the wonderful experiments appeared, a view of the matter which the apparently simple explanations of most deceiving illusions is not always calculated to inspire in the uninitiated. This view, however, he did not entertain long, soon coming to the conclusion that the cause was a good deal more mystifying than the effect.

He was not, however, to be beaten. Having obtained from his landlady a pack of cards, and one or two requisites for the magic art, he set diligently to work to master some of the intricacies of the tricks contained in the book.

Having succeeded in this, after no small amount of trouble, he became somewhat prepossessed with his own skill, and liking the amusement as well, determined to try his hand on further wonders, in which a gorgeous handkerchief, eggs, boxes of mysterious make, pieces of money covered with dark paper on one side, bottles with covers to fit, etc., etc., played a prominent part.

With a dogged determination worthy of a better cause, he spent hours frowning over a musty book on sleight-of-hand, which, on his new hobby being known, had also been presented to him by Madame Petite, whose father, according to the little French lady's account, had been a perfect master in the magic art. Soon his (Jerry's) visitors were daily asked to witness some proof of his skill.

These impromptu displays were very funny, since his friend's chaff often rendered the conjuror so nervous that more than once it ended in his

exposing the whole trick. This, however, he took very good-temperedly, joining in the laugh against himself when he handed back his trick coins in the place of the one he had succeeded in borrowing—after much resistance—from Will Breakneck utterly failed to find a scarf pin, also a loan, which defection might, he was assured, lead to unpleasant consequences had the lender been one of an ordinary audience, burnt to a cinder a handkerchief which was to have been restored to its owner, washed, ironed, folded, and scented, and, most amusing calamity of all, after having successfully caused an egg to disappear, as he fondly imagined, an ill-advised gesture of triumph disclosed the whereabouts of the same by a sticky yellow fluid, which discovered itself by flowing from up his sleeve over his hand on to the floor. This last-named accident was mainly due to the fact of the guide to magic art neglecting to mention that the conjurer should be careful to have his eggs blown before venturing to experiment with them, a fact which would certainly have saved damage to Mrs Parkins's parlour carpet and furniture. The good lady bore the same with heroic fortitude, willing, I believe, to sacrifice all her belongings at Jerry's shrine, looking upon it as doubly sanctified by the mysteries of his new undertaking.

The Methodist pew-opener's sweetheart did not, I may say, regard the favoured lodger's doings in the same light. She described them as "doings of the Evil One," and with difficulty could be got

to set foot inside the room where he sat in the old leather arm-chair, a small table in front of him covered with the requisites for his art, his guide book on his knees, over which he bent—with his wiry hair standing up erect on his forehead, and his eyebrows meeting over his green eyes with a great air of determination—while he gave, in a tone of marked decision and emphasis, the directions relative to his arrangement and shuffling of a well-bethumbed pack of cards, or the disposition of various disappearing articles. She resolutely refused “to take a card”—a request to which any one and every one within arm’s reach of the would-be conjurer was subjected, and on being once an involuntary witness of the handkerchief trick, in this instance successful, she gave notice on the spot, declaring that if it was possible for “one man as didn’t make no pretence of being a laundress to wash and iron as quick as that without no more fuss than waving his arms about as though there were bees buzzing round his head, she didn’t see why he shouldn’t as easily do all the housework; and she at least wasn’t going to run the risk of one day seeing the brooms, dusters, and flannels a-doing their work all by themselves. It was more than any respectable girl could be expected to stand.”

Nothing would induce the young lady to change her mind, and indeed the accounts with which she favoured the other lodgers of the doings of the being for whom their comforts were neglected—accounts, however, which Jerry’s supper completely

knocked on the head—made it advisable that her resignation should be accepted. I may add that she afterwards married the pew-opener, who, curiously enough, a little later in life also exhibited a predilection for sleight-of-hand, which took the form of practising the vanishing coin trick—exercising the same upon the poor-box outside the chapel where he was engaged, with a skill which only experience could acquire.

Like our hero, his skill was not, however, infallible, and one day, after listening with devout and saintlike attention to a special charity sermon—which had resulted in a more than usually large collection—he, like Jerry, failed to make the coins he had borrowed for his own use disappear in his usual ingenious way, and was straightway made to vanish himself into the dim obscurity of the town jail, leaving his wife, the ex-general servant, to support herself and five children as best she could—in which sore straits I doubt not she often wished she had been endued with the power of house management which had made Mrs Parkins's lodger so obnoxious to her righteous vision. Her place in the service was taken by a country girl who shared her mistress's veneration of our hero to such a degree that, unlike her predecessor, it was with difficulty that she could be induced to give up haunting the doorway of the front parlour, a habit which, though it supplied the conjuror with an admiring and appreciative audience, did not add to the comfort and enjoyment of the other members of the establishment.

Conscious, from the earnestness with which these two women followed his pursuit, that he had a reputation to sustain, Jerry did not allow himself to be disheartened by the little mishaps in his efforts in the magic art, and while he looked eagerly forward to the time when he should be at his old place in the show once more, he found the days thus occupied pass by no means disagreeably, until something occurred which put patience and sleight-of-hand entirely out of his mind—something which, though it was certainly an art of a kind, is, alas! far too often to be fittingly called magic.

I have said that one of the most enjoyable periods of the day was when he saw Lizette, although her visits were not naturally all so delightful as the first. It so happened that her way to the circus lay past Mrs Parkins's lodging-house, for which merciful dispensation of Providence Jerry was deeply grateful, for twice a day, sometimes more, the little fancy-rider found it convenient to return home to her own lodgings between the two performances, for tea. This was rather a tiring walk in the heat of the sun, for Lizette could not afford any but very poor lodgings on the outskirts of the town; but who cares whether the road is rough or smooth when one has a pleasant companion? At least so Jerry argued.

He knew the times at which she was likely to pass, and regularly took his stand, or rather his seat, at the parlour window, peering over the box of geraniums which ornamented the sill, in order to catch sight of that little grey-robed figure and

the pretty face under the big straw hat with the wreath of poppies—a wreath like he had once woven for her before—before he had found out that he was “too late.”

Regularly every day he watched for her coming, though his only reward was a clasp of the little hand in its cool mitten, and a chat over the geraniums, which, I am bound to own, did not escape without injury, owing to Jerry's efforts to get a nearer view of the said pretty face, which looked up so merrily at him from under the poppies. This with one who would never be anything to him but a very dear friend.

But much as he enjoyed this forbidden fruit, I fancy it was not without a dash of pain in it.

Truth to tell, he had ever present in his mind those words of the ring-master's, “You have won my heart. Do you believe I am true? One day I will put you to the proof!” He often wondered had the proof been asked for, and every day, when he returned Lizette's greetings, he wondered whether she had this news to tell him, for which he looked so eagerly, yet knew it would come bitterly when “some day” was “to-day.”

And surely that “to-day” was not far off.

No man, Jerry argued, would be so much in love as he judged Carl Hermann to be, and yet he put off forging so strong a link in the chain of his happiness. He (Jerry) would be, he knew, the first in whom Lizette would confide her secret. So day by day he waited and waited, expecting what he knew must be coming. Every time he

saw the pretty, laughing face over the geraniums he thought, "Now it is coming. She looks happier than ever this morning"; or, "Ah, she has the news this morning; there is a sober look in her eyes," and so on, varying the expression from grave to gay, and the reverse, and yet always a false prophet.

Lizette called good morning to him over the geraniums, inquired after his "disablement," as she called it, expressed her sympathy, or remonstrated with him when he showed signs of impatience at his prolonged captivity, in her queer broken English, which was so pleasant to his ear, as merrily as though she was indeed the happiest little body in the world; or listened eagerly to an account of his success with some new trick, and answered his inquiries as to how the show was going on, in the most sober manner Jerry had ever seen her assume, but never once did she give any reason for her changeful mood such as Jerry looked forward to hearing.

So he went on living day by day, as it were, without so much as a thought of coming trouble, until suddenly the knowledge was forced upon him whether he would or no.

It was one afternoon when he was deep in the magic art, that he was surprised by a visit from none other than the worthy Charles Petman himself, who, on Mrs Parkins ascertaining who he was, was shown with much ceremony into the parlour.

As he had just had a terrific row with one of the

grooms, in which, of course, he had come off, as he imagined, victor, the manager was in a far better temper than usual.

He greeted the clown with many good-tempered oaths, and swore roundly that he was worth those fools "Merry-go-round, Here-we-are-again, and Tomtit and the rest rolled into one," and vowed if he didn't make some sort of an appearance soon he would sue him for damages.

"Patchouli thinks he's a rare devil among the girls. Epsom and Breakneck think the same, but d— me, you can lick 'em into fits when you like, though you ain't up to much when the paint's off. The gals like a lark. When does that old idiot of a Pills say you'll be all right?"

"He's given me another ten days, I think," said Jerry laughing, not a little pleased, as most of us are, to find we have been missed; "ten days' solitary confinement. I'd rather it been hard labour."

"D—— you, why the devil couldn't you have kept out of the way of mischief?"

He seemed quite to overlook the fact that it was his own daughter who had been the cause of the clown's mishap, and that if it was a loss to him it was also such to the invalid, to say nothing of the pain he had had to suffer.

Jerry, however, also overlooked the fact, and expressed his regret at his enforced absence.

"It's a deuced annoying thing, just at the time I can't afford to lose anyone. Here's first you, and now Madame Petite off the list. Madame's

got one of her old attacks, they tell me, though I'm d—— if I know what they mean, unless it's temper, sulks, or something, because that hound Epsom's been on the spree lately, though why she wastes so much as a moment's thought on him, —— me if I can understand. But there, all women are fools, more or less. Anyhow, Madame's sent word to-day that she can't appear. It's a good thing Rosa happened to be in a good temper and offered to take her place to-morrow, or the show would be going to the devil, what with the quadrille done away with altogether, and the little Dutch girl winning every race—for Madame was the only one among the rest who made any show at all. But now Rosa will let her see how to ride, I can tell you—not but what Hartzmann knows a trick or two, and the Turk's a good beast to go."

Not laying any particular meaning to this last bit of news, though he wondered why Lizette had not told him of it, but recollected afterwards how long it was since he had had any long chat with her, Jerry sympathised with Mr Petman on his sorrows as a manager, and congratulated him as a father, and then proceeded to listen to another piece of news which that gentleman had come to impart.

It seemed that so ill-informed had our hero been of the true state of things at the show, that he was totally unaware that the engagement at the Gardens was near to its close, coming, in fact, to an abrupt conclusion on the following day.

It appeared that the worthy manager had hoped to "hold on" another week or so, but already the weather showed signs of a final break up. More than once the performance in the hippodrome had suffered a serious interruption in the shape of a sharp downpour, which had also materially affected the attendance in the evening, and it was decided to commence a series of winter concerts and entertainments in the pavilion, the shelter of which, in case of stormy weather, the people would be certain to prefer to the not so durable tent.

Added to this, Mr Petman always declared himself possessed of sufficient "'cuteness" to know when to "hold fast" and when to "leave go," and having so far made a good thing of his tenancy in the Gardens, he decided it was time to do the latter. Therefore, on the following Monday (this was Friday) the show would lay aside its whilom glory, and once more assume its wandering habits. This resolution was furthered by the knowledge that, owing to a colliery strike at a neighbouring town, something might be made out of the opportunity.

But a greater advantage was yet in store. It seemed that on the morrow some royal personages were expected at the town to open a line of railway which had just been completed, and as their visit was to be of at least two days' duration, it was conjectured, not without reason, that they would pay a visit to the Gardens as one of the most prominent features of the town.

What was more likely than that they would be

desirous of witnessing a performance in the world-renowned circus—at any rate, the manager meant to “try and catch ’em,” as he not too elegantly phrased it. Everything was to be in “best bib and tucker,” and all resources were to contribute to making a show worthy the occasion.

While Mr Petman made remarks to this effect, Jerry did not yet perceive “what he was driving at,” as he phrased it, until on his breaking fresh ground with some remarks about conjuring, he began to see that the object of the visit was to get him to consent to rejoin the show. On coming to this conclusion, Jerry amused himself by listening, while the mighty manager tried to bait him, until at last he was driven into a corner, and had to put the question “straight.”

So out it came.

Would the clown, on promise of an extra consideration, disobey the doctor’s orders, run what might be the risk of undoing the good already done, to say nothing of putting himself into another term of imprisonment, and contrive a turn of some sort for the performance on the coming eventful Saturday? A rumour of his skill in conjuring had reached Mr Petman, who at once caught at the idea. A conjuring clown would be a novelty, hence his visit. Jerry’s services must be secured at any reasonable cost, and had our hero been a little sharper than he was in such matters concerning his own importance, he might have driven a bargain greatly to his advantage.

He was, however, too much occupied with

weighing in his own mind whether he ought or ought not to accept the offer made to him, and at length, being unable to quite settle the matter all at once, said he would wait for the doctor's opinion, but by the hopeful way in which he spoke, Mr Petman was sure he had not wasted a little bit of flattery for once, and went away rejoicing at his skill as a diplomatist.

Truth to tell, it was by no means the unusually fair words which the manager had used, which had caused Jerry to be somewhat exuberant when referring his decision to the doctor. Indeed, that was, as he told himself, a "lame" excuse (treasuring up this remark to bring in in some way when he made his reappearance before the public). He did not intend to apply to that worthy at all—he had had enough of lotions and ointments, and had begun to think that his fear of suffering from his injury for the rest of his days had been somewhat traded upon, as indeed was more than likely.

Now the prospect of obliging Mr Petman had made the longing in our hero to be back in his old place once more stronger than ever, and no sooner was the door fairly closed behind that gentleman, that he made the house ring with such a wild "Wol-al-hoo, here we are again," as had not gladdened his lips for many a long day; and when Mrs Parkins ran with the greatest speed her portliness and sudden palpitation, caused by the unearthly sound, would allow her, there was her favourite lodger in high glee indulging in

such monkey-like antics as she afterwards declared "was enough to give her the creeps."

At the sight of the good old soul's very distressed countenance, which plainly expressed her fear that his long imprisonment had turned his brain, Jerry came to a sudden standstill in a one-legged hand-over-hander, and assured her in his gravest manner of his perfect sanity.

It seemed that the familiar call and cry had had a magical effect, and Jerry, as he expressed it, "was all there again in a trice."

Mrs Parkins opined that it was lucky no one in her house had as much as whispered the call during the earlier stage of the clown's disablement, for goodness knows what damage he might then have done to his injured foot.

Even now, although he assured her that, contrary to his expectation, the effort cost him scarcely any pain at all, she was full of dismal forebodings for the consequences of his "outbreak." It was vain for her to shake her head and wipe away a fugitive tear on her apron, Jerry would not be suppressed, and in answer to all her prophecies gravely announced his intention of walking on his head until his foot was quite well—according to her idea of the matter, which of course was better than his—straightway putting his preaching into practice by walking down the kitchen stairs the wrong way up and alighting at the bottom of the flight with a double somersault, which feat for ever afterwards stamped him as a king among men in the eyes of the boy

who was cleaning the knives in the back kitchen.

This youth was so impressed by the said feat, that on the morrow, while at Sunday school, when answering some questions concerning the angels in Jacob's dream, he gave a rather original view of their actions, and when corrected, stoutly declared he "didn't see nothing wonderful in it at all. Mrs Parkins's lodger 'd beat 'em into fits," adding, in expressive school, or rather street boy slang, a description of the proceeding on which his belief was founded—a description which might have led to Mrs Parkins's back door being besieged by inquiring infants eager for a sight of Jerry, right way up or otherwise, had it not been for the awful picture which the teacher drew, in which, stamped by his answer as a "bad" boy, the knife-cleaner was to go the way of all bad boys in story books, and die an early and violent death.

I may say that not being a story-book boy, such a fate did not overtake the precocious infant in question. He lived to a ripe old age, retaining to the last a deep reverence for the hero of this narrative, to whom once more we return.

CHAPTER IV.

A VISIT AND ITS RESULTS.

IT so happened that Jerry's delight at literally finding his feet again led him to be a trifle injudicious, and the feat which earned him such lasting regard, reminded him, by means of a slight twinge of pain in his injured member, that he must not presume too much on his recovery.

Hiding this fact from Mrs Parkins, for fear she should take forcible means to prevent his carrying out his intention of taking his turn as usual at the show on the auspicious morrow, he wisely determined to turn his attention to his conjuring, in order to make a few tricks take the place of his usual tumbling on that day, and until he should be sufficiently recovered, to reserve them as an extra accomplishment.

He was just feeling considerably elated at having successfully mastered the handkerchief trick, which so completely upset the Methodist pew-opener's *fiancée*, and Mrs Parkins had just

dropped into the parlour for one of the innumerable "little chats" in which she indulged during the day, when an interruption took place, in the shape of another visitor. This time it was Smith, the groom, who had been more than once before to inquire after the invalid, but hitherto had refused the landlady's most pressing invitations to step inside, satisfied with sending his best respects to Mr Jerry and offer of his services if he could do anything for him.

On this occasion, however, having made his usual inquiries and sent the same message—receiving in return Jerry's thanks, but he was well looked after at present; all he could do was to be well up to his work at the Gardens (*i.e.*, conscientiously fill his office of self-constituted groom to a certain little *artiste*)—the groom did not as usual excuse himself for having troubled any one to open the door to him and shuffle in his bashful way down the steps and back the way he came. Although Mrs Parkins, a little put out at having her *tête-à-tête* spoilt, was hardly as pressing as usual for him to come in—an invitation which he as resolutely declined as on former occasions—he seemed to have some hesitation in quitting the doorstep and required Mrs Parkins to repeat the message, until at length that worthy lady fairly lost patience. Her inquiry as to whether he wanted to know anything more was not calculated to inspire the groom with any extra confidence.

It reached Jerry's ears, together with Smith's

reply in his uncertain, hesitating tones. He quickly interpreted the latter into a desire to see him, and at once called out his intention of going to the door himself if his visitor did not at once "step inside."

Upon this, after carefully wiping his feet on the mat, a totally unnecessary proceeding, as the dust was nearly blinding in the roads, and refusing to trust his hat to the hatstand, Smith was at length induced to introduce his lank, ungainly figure into the parlour.

Here the sight of Jerry, surrounded by his "conjuring tricks," as he afterwards described it, had much the same effect upon him as upon the Methodist's sweetheart, and much as Jerry tried to set him at his ease, it was not until by a dexterous movement that he had hidden the "tricks" under the handkerchief, that he entertained any hopes of ascertaining the cause of the groom's rather confused manner.

It was plain there was something amiss with him, for allowing for the nervousness consequent upon his interview with Mrs Parkins, he was even slower in speech and more cautious in manner than usual, and Jerry, after finding all manœuvres and stratagem in vain, was in despair at ever finding out the important something which he, the groom, evidently had come on purpose to impart to him and yet seemed to find such a difficulty in so doing.

Our hero thought to get at it by a roundabout way, and began by asking how things were getting

on with the show, determining to say nothing of his reappearance, in case of disappointment.

"Things is fine, sir, fine ; at least the audience is," with a significant stress on the reservation, which Jerry noting asked rather anxiously,—

"No accident last night, I hope," visions of the Turk having evinced vicious propensities making the clown start and sit upright in his seat.

"Oh no, the 'os is all right ; behaves as though he knew who his mistress was," said with an air of defiance which conveyed to the listener that some one else's "'os" had *not* been behaving in a manner befitting his owner.

"Any of the other horses been up to their tricks, then, the Emperor, Daystar, or—"

"Ah, Daystar hasn't had the devil in him for some time now, and hadn't need have." The emphasis this time on "Daystar" and the angry look on the groom's ugly scarred face, made Jerry sure that he was right in the conjecture that if that animal had not had a fit of the tempers lately some one else had.

"Surely," he said, in a voice which had an ominous ring in it, "surely Epsom hasn't dared plague you again because I wasn't there to defend you."

"Lor', no, sir, he won't try hitting me again, I fancy," and Smith's mouth dropped a bit at the corners. He knew there were other ways by which the jockey could torment him than by bodily injury. "And if he had, I shouldn't have come here to worry you. I ain't worth your

troubling about, nor anyone else for that matter." Again that mysterious emphasis which left Jerry as much in the dark as ever. This was more than he could stand.

Never before had the groom's slowness of speech and thought roused in him anything but pity. Now, he was fast losing patience, and finding it of no use to try and drag out his information by means of stratagem, he determined to go straight to the point.

"Now look here, Smith," he said, fixing his eyes sternly on the fellow's face as he sat playing nervously with his shabby hat, "I know you have got something to tell me. It's no use beating about the bush. I'm not good at catching at straws, so just out with what you've got to say," and being suddenly struck with the idea whether fear of any consequences which might ensue was the difficulty, "don't be afraid any harm 'll come of it. You can trust me. Now, then, what is it?"

At first it seemed likely that Smith, after shying at the former manoeuvres, would at this very direct one, bolt altogether had not Jerry held him sternly in check with that steady glance of his fiery grey-green eyes.

But although he was fully prepared for some strange disclosure on the groom's part, he fairly recoiled at the statement, or rather suggestion, which did come in one quick, short sentence very unlike his usual blundering utterance.

"Look here," he said, suddenly leaving off whirling his cap, and returning the clown's glance

with one of equal warmth, "Look here, ye're in love with her, aren't yer?—yer know who I mean, Lizette Hartzmann. Yer wouldn't give me a chance of so much as to leave a blessed buckle of that Turk's harness undone, let alone lay a finger on her cloak. If it hadn't have been for some one else as slipped into yer place while you was away ye'd just be her sweetheart out and out, wouldn't yer?"

Was ever a question on such a tender subject more direct?

Poor Jerry! Here all this time he had been comforting himself with one thought in his trouble, and one which the pride of nature he possessed had prompted, and that was that at least his feelings were unknown to any one save himself.

Like many heroes who have been disappointed in love he inwardly rejoiced that his secret was his alone. He bore his pain and bitter disappointment without even a word of sympathy. Better this than she in whom he had placed his trust should have one thought of regret that she should have been unable to control her affections to dim the brightness of her happiness. If the truth became known it should have been wrung from him in the dead of night under most thrilling circumstances by his deadliest enemy, his rival, or breathed in gasps like a dying man's confession into the ear of some faithful friend who would be too much overcome to give any more substantial comfort than that expressed by wringing the hap-

less lover's hand, at the same time keeping his gaze fixed anywhere but on the face of the same, unwilling to see the tale of sorrow repeated on its noble features.

The true view of the matter did not, I am sure, present itself in such glowing colours of sentimentalism as this, and once more I have to present Jerry to my reader in a situation totally at variance with his character as hero.

Alas for romance! Instead of being in either of the situations already described, here was he a very common-place figure in his ill-fitting conjurer's suit—accommodated with capacious pockets for his tricks—his injured foot encased in a huge felt boot, at the back of his head a smoking-cap—a most gorgeous affair, orange and green in colour, extra ornamented with a mass of gold braid, the whole a present from the enamoured widow—sitting bolt upright in the old leathern arm-chair, transfixing the groom with his determined gaze, the fellow looking with his sleepy, bleared blue eyes into his face while he made his statement, which would take no denial.

Jerry did not attempt it.

For a moment, so abrupt was this sudden charge at his secret, he could not say a word. Only all of a sudden the half-angry, half-laughing look died out of his grey-green eyes, and it was his turn to be unable to face his companion. Some words he was about to utter were stayed on his lips. He suddenly turned away his head, and

seemed to become intent upon studying the wall-paper.

For some moments there was silence in the parlour. Smith's burst of eloquence seemed to have rendered him perfectly overcome. He was once more absorbed in plaiting the greasy lining of his hat with feeble, nervous fingers.

Presently Jerry turned his head very slowly, and there was a gleam of defiance in his eyes now, as though he meant to resent this ruthless intrusion into his confidence. One thought uppermost in his mind was that if this dullard, with his half wits, had penetrated his secret, what was more likely than that others had done so also? Others who, with perhaps different motives, would blazon it abroad, and put an end for ever to his brotherly friendship, where all else was impossible.

The first thought which forced itself into his mind was the doubt as to the light in which his love affair might be looked upon by his successful rival. And those other ears which it might reach—would they by-and-by cover his poor little story with a cloak of ridicule, which would make him and all concerned a laughing-stock for all the coarse jests and jokes of his so-called friends, and without doubt also of his enemies, few as these were, who would readily seize upon this occasion for showing off their so-called wit?

But then again rose the more unselfish idea as to how Lizette's gentle, childlike nature would be grieved at the blow she had so involuntarily inflicted upon her old friend's happiness. Yes, she

would be grieved, and that, perhaps, all through the blundering stupidity of this silly fellow.

It was this last thought which roused the gleam of anger to Jerry's eyes, and when he did turn his head there were harsh words on his lips.

These, however, were never uttered. If anything was calculated to calm the young clown's irritation—never of a very lasting nature—it was the sight of Lizette's devoted slave in his simplicity, innocent of wherein he had offended, his dull face for once illumined by a look of intelligence as he awaited the answer to his very home question.

Remembering in whose interest it was he had taken what must have been for him untold pains to solve this problem, and at the same time overcome his usual bashfulness to give words to the solution, it seemed impossible to quench his ardour, even though it was perhaps misplaced.

It might have occurred to Jerry that in this poor fellow's wandering mind there was a dim, half-formed idea that in this little German girl he saw the one gentlewoman who in all the world was worthy of his adoration, servile as it was—an idea which was but the bud which had developed into the beautiful, full-blown blossom in Jerry's mind, which yet he compared to such a disadvantage with the more delicate moss-rose of one who was more worthy than he of the place he coveted. At any rate, at the sight of him waiting so patiently for the answer which could not be a denial, instead of an angry retort at his stupidity, and an inquiry as to how far he had misused his knowledge, there

came a look of pity into Jerry's face, not for himself, but for him who far more needed it.

He hesitated a moment, then met the expectant gaze as frankly as it was raised, and half unconsciously laying his hand on the rough, shabby black coat sleeve, said very quietly, almost tenderly—both because of the thought that this poor fellow was suffering under the same blow as himself, and because this was a subject upon which to his warm-hearted nature it seemed he could not speak with harsh, angry tones, owing to some unconscious influence, which makes even the least reverent of us all speak with hushed voices in a sacred edifice,—

“So you have found out my secret, have you? I thought no one but myself knew. But it seems you have sharper eyes than the rest, and it's no use trying to hide the truth. I *did* think once upon a time that what you've guessed might happen; but, you see, it wouldn't do for us to have everything we wanted, so I'm going to try and get along as best I can, like I did before—before I found out what you know.”

He paused, half afraid to say more, lest he should betray too much, inwardly hoping that he had made himself sufficiently clear to Smith's dull brain to avoid any further explanation.

It seemed he had done so, for the groom, without removing his eyes from the floor, where he was studying with sleepy interest the bright intricate pattern of the carpet, nodded his head with an air of great wisdom, and said gravely,—

“I know—I know—I can see more than folks think, though I ain’t as sharp in saying out what I mean as I might be. No, I ain’t good at speechifying, but what I sez I means, and I’ve seen how things be with you and the party in question. I’ve had my eyes open”—(at their widest extent these orbs would not have gained much in comparison with those of the pig tribe; but, nevertheless, according to the owner’s declaration, they were by no means defective in vision)—“and I’ve seen as how you’re ready to worship the very ground she walks on. Satin and diamonds aren’t good enough for her. It’s my belief, if you could get her a pair of angel’s wings and let her go straight to heaven, you’d be content. And I ain’t going to say but what you’re right; and what’s more, I ain’t going to stand by and see things going on as they are.”

After this second long speech the groom came to a sudden full stop, just when he had raised Jerry to the very tiptoe of expectation as to what he could possibly mean by his repeated inuendoes. It was very evident that something of great importance had occurred to rouse his rather defective “speechifying” power to such an effort.

Jerry waited a few moments to see if he would be able to take up the point where he had left off; but as he was once more absorbed in his study of the carpet, Jerry himself took up the ball, and made another dash at some sort of conclusion.

“Things going on how?”

As, in response to this broad hint, Smith still

hesitated, Jerry determined to see what sternness would do.

"Now, look here, Smith, I can see there's something the matter, and that something has to do with somebody in whom we are both interested. What is it?"

But it was useless to try and drag the required information out of the groom's muddled brain. He seemed to have hopelessly lost the clue of his discourse, and all Jerry could get out of him was dark hints, accompanied by ominous shakes of the head, the total of which was that something was seriously amiss at the show, something which seriously affected "somebody" in whom Jerry *had* more than ordinary interest, and that if he wanted to find a more explicit reading of the riddle "he had best come and see for himself."

This last contingency was evidently the summary of the groom's desire, and having expressed it, he seemed much relieved, if not comforted, and rose with a great show of haste to go, as though he had not wasted so many moments in studying the carpet with so much deliberation.

Jerry therewith inwardly announced his intention of coming to see, but, for reasons known only to himself, kept the conditions of his coming a secret.

Before, however, the groom finally took his departure, he regarded Jerry with a searching look from his sleepy eyes, and, seeming for an instant to awake to a sense of consciousness and understanding, said abruptly and with great haste,

as though he were anxious to take hold of the idea before it filtered through his sieve-like mind:—

“Look here, I didn’t mean to tell yer as how I knowed about you and her, but it slipped out somehow, like most things do. It worn’t my fault I found it out. I ain’t as usual quick at seeing things, but it come to me somehow. I’m mighty sorry, cuss me if I ain’t, and so would she be if she knew, but”—reassuringly, as Jerry tried to speak —“she don’t, at least not now, no more don’t no one, and I sha’n’t split, you bet. I don’t suppose as how I should have known, only I heard you once say to her, ‘We’re always going to be friends, Liz?’ and somehow the way you sez it makes me thinks you was what the boys calls spooney, only in a different sort of way. So I watches, and thinks as how it’s all going on all right until you goes away and—you goes away and—well, goes away and comes back again. Then I sees as there’s summat wrong, but I don’t give up watching, not I, and that’s why I comes here to-day and tells you to come and see. That’s all.” Then with a sudden incomprehensible earnestness, as though that unintelligible longing within him had made itself felt and moved him to the impulse, “You don’t mind my knowing, do you? If I hadn’t I shouldn’t have known who to go to. You’re her ‘friend,’ you know, and you’d say what was best, but if you don’t like me to know, I’ll try and forget all about it, because I’d do anything for you and her. You’re the only two in the world

as ever went out of your way to do me a kindness."

Evidently in this half-witted lad's mind ingratitude was a deadly sin, and one of which he scorned being guilty.

There was no mistaking the sincerity of his speech. Jerry felt suddenly a total change of feeling which made it seem balm to his sorrow that this poor rough fellow should "know" and sympathise.

"It's all right," he said quietly, wringing the groom's rough stained hand. "We both think the same about her in our way. We're about the only friends she's got besides him, and we're going to stick by her through thick and thin if she wants us."

A sudden strange, unintelligible look had come into the groom's face during one portion of the foregoing speech, but at the last words it cleared again. He returned Jerry's grasp with one of great fervour, then squashed his hat over his eyes, and, without another word, blundered out into the hall, banged the door with great violence after him, and not so much as once glancing behind, shuffled off down the street at great speed, considering the heat.

After he had gone, Jerry, thinking it in vain to try and make sense of what had passed between them, felt confident in his own mind that his visitor had got some confused idea into his head, perhaps without a particle of reason. At any rate he would satisfy his doubts at the earliest

opportunity. Here was an additional reason for his paying his projected visit to the show, when he would certainly follow Smith's example of keeping his eyes wide open.

Having arrived at this decision—determining to put the subject entirely from him, hoping by this means to get rid of a vague feeling of uneasiness, which in spite of his want of belief in the groom's powers of discernment (had he not proved himself capable in discovering the clown's secret?) would force its way into his mind, he once more turned his attention to his conjuring, did his best to concentrate his thoughts upon some new departure in the magic art, gave this up and, to try and restore the cheerful state of equanimity which the coming of his visitor had overthrown, essayed once more the handkerchief trick.

This he accomplished with even more ease than before—a circumstance which should have at least charmed back the air of wonted cheerfulness to his brow.

But such was not the case.

The success which he had striven after so long no longer caused him any thrill of enjoyment or triumph. Metaphorically speaking the tricks were a failure, the magician's thoughts were indulging in sleight-of-hand on their own account, and at last, with the double-edged reflection that hands and hearts must even in an ordinary way go together, the "tricks" were hidden under their usual covering, the gorgeous handkerchief, and throwing himself back with a gesture of impatience—very

unusual in him—Jerry gave himself up to his reflections, for the first time for many weeks allowing himself the luxury of a good think.

Hitherto he had looked upon the pleasure as rather dangerous to any one in his frame of mind, and avoided it in consequence, undertaking his voluntary fast with a perseverance which any young would-be penitent might have envied.

Now, however, perhaps with the recollection of his late visitor's rough but kindly sympathy to unlock the drawers of memory, in which lay still, fresh and green with all the charm of beauty and sweet fragrance yet clinging to them, the so-early-plucked flowers of his first and only love, he sought no longer to resist the sad delight of living over again those days when, for fear of losing all by daring too much, as Smith had expressed it, "he had gone away and come back again"—come back to find it too late.

How well he recalled every step of the way which had ended so suddenly in that stern impassable no thoroughfare—"too late."

Yes, he recalled it all—that dreary wet night so many months ago when he had been lucky enough to save a timid fearful girl from the rough insults of a set of drunken idlers—a stranger girl with a sad, weary face, lit up by those beautiful brown eyes whose thanks had been far more implicit than those few broken English sentences uttered by trembling lips; the advent of the little fancy-rider into the show, when her dainty highness in her fresh satin robes had deigned to claim his acquaintance, and

who in the days which followed clung to him as it were with a child-like confidence which had ripened the healthy bud of friendship into the beautiful full-blown blossom, "love," which now lay withering and fading in that hiding-place for all joys and sorrows—"memory."

These sacred tokens of "what might have been" had already been touched—gently, it is true—by one stranger's touch; but now they had once seen light, would others handle them and scatter the withered leaves with a ruthless hand? As he called to mind his own storm-tossed harvest, there rose in Jerry's mind a knowledge of the brighter but not more beautiful blossoms which it had been the happier lot of some one else to pluck.

Thus he sat alone in the silence of the little parlour, looking out into the busy, noisy street beyond, but heeding nothing that passed without, only seeing in fancy over the tall dusty geraniums, with their bright gaudy flowers, the pretty face under the big shady straw hat with its wreath of poppies, which for so many days past had called him merry greeting to cheer his captivity. Yes, there it was, the same face with the beautiful nut-brown eyes, which when he had first seen them had been full of a sadness and dreariness such as he unconsciously prayed he might never see in them again; there they were, peeping at him over the leafy screen as Lizette stayed on the pavement, all unheeding of the passers-by, to chat with the captive; softening with pity for his pain—for Jerry's injury was of a far more serious

nature than he had at first supposed—while she gave him what comfort she could (and that was far more than she knew); growing merry again as she reported how well things were prospering with the show, opening wide with fearful remonstrance when, impatient at the bustle and sunshine without, he vowed to escape from his burdensome captivity; sparkling with fun when she recounted some little pleasure which she had had, and growing soft again, almost grave, when by some chance word Jerry would try as it were to open the way for the news which as yet he had never heard.

As he recalled these changing shades and moods, the knowledge came unconsciously to Jerry that once the sparkles and gleams of light which spoke of sunshine within had never failed his searching gaze, but lately he had been led more often to expect that for which he waited, because of a deeper shade which had dimmed the brightness.

And with this knowledge came a sense of another change which had gradually crept over his intercourse with his little friend.

Once, as we have seen, she had, all unheedful of the passers-by, stayed before his window to talk with him, often incurring the risk of racing through the rest of her journey, for fear of being late at the Gardens.

After a time, no doubt finding a hurried walk in the heat of the sun, which, however, as autumn was fast approaching, did not increase but rather de-

creased in power, hardly a favourable preparation for her performance in the ring, she less often, and at last, never so fatigued herself.

This husbanding of her powers was not effected by her starting any the earlier for the Gardens, but was made the excuse for her gradually shortening her very promiscuous *tête-à-tête* with the captive, till at last a brief greeting and inquiry was all that was interchanged in lieu of the former friendly intercourse.

But even this state of affairs suffered a change. She who was usually so punctual in starting at least, for it would not have done to have kept some one waiting at the meeting-place, which was, strangely enough, at the end of the very street in which Mrs Parkins's lodging-house was situated, should he find it possible for him to be there,—the little fancy-rider, I say, who was once so punctual, suddenly took a fit into her head to start at all sorts of strange times, so that unless the watcher at the window took up his position very early at his post, he was more than likely to miss her greeting.

Sometimes fully an hour before the show even opened, the brown eyes would peep for a moment over the geraniums, and without any further greeting than a wave of the hand, pass on; at others, when he had entirely given up all idea of seeing her, something would call him to the window in time to see a grey-robed figure vanishing in the distance.

Yes, the friendly chat had been thus slowly re-

duced to what might have been called "a bowing acquaintance," a nod and smile, a wave of the hand, and sometimes not even this. Lizette, in total forgetfulness of the patient watcher, would go with feet strangely lagging—no doubt she was tired—past the window, with her eyes on the ground, and without even a cheery look in his direction.

Nay, more than this, more than once lately he had determined not to be so baulked of his little pleasure, and resolutely persisted in his watch, but only to be five out of six times disappointed.

"Ah," he would say to himself, "she must have slipped by while I was talking to Mrs Parkins," or, "This side of the road is so crowded, no doubt she would walk on the other," and such-like excuses, which had always satisfied him at the time, but which now occurred to him certainly without tending to solve the riddle proposed by the groom.

What could be the meaning of it all? Whence came the cloud which seemed to have risen between the two friends; surely it was over himself that the shadow had fallen, and not over little Lizette?

During his captivity, what was more likely than that he had got silly fancies into his mind; or even suppose the little fancy-rider had been so much taken up with her lover that she had no smiles and merry looks for him, why should he construe it into a foreboding of evil?

Bah! he would put away these idle fancies, such

as any silly love-sick lover would have indulged in, and on the morrow he would laugh heartily at himself for having entertained them. He would see Lizette and her handsome lover walking side by side in the sunshine, telling the world, if not in words, at least in actions, that no proof of what each felt was needed.

But even while he pictured in his own mind this happiness for one he loved, as half awake, half dreaming, he unconsciously kept watch at the window, suddenly it seemed to him that a face appeared once again over the geraniums, a face with eyes which had so often smiled and danced under his glance, but which now were robbed of their brightness by a look of sadness and weariness such as had won his heart that dreary night, when they had thanked him for his kindness, a look such as he had so lately prayed he might never see in them again.

So unlike were they in expression to what he had imagined them in the pretty *tableau* of love and happiness, that for a moment the dreamer remained spellbound as it were.

Then he sprang to his feet, drew aside with a ruthless hand the lace curtains, Mrs Parkins's pride, which hung over the window, and peered down the street.

Surely it was only his fancy playing him tricks again; that woe-begone countenance had been conjured up by his own imagination.

Yet, no, for there, half way down the road, walking with slow steps, as though weary, her

head slightly bent as though to hide her face from those who passed her on the way, went the well-known, well-beloved grey-robed figure, alone, and walking not in the sunshine but in the shadow.

A moment he saw her, then she was lost in the crowd which thronged the street, and once more he was left alone with his thoughts. It was then, and not till then, that he began to understand that the cloud which had risen was not over him, but over some one else whom he loved far better than any one in the whole world besides.

For the rest of the evening Mrs Parkins found her favourite lodger far from the agreeable companion he usually proved himself.

And small wonder. How could he joke and laugh with the memory of those tear-bedimmed eyes in his mind, a memory which haunted him sadly during the night, so that he dreamt—but there, dreams are silly things, as he told himself on waking.

And with that he turned over and went to sleep once more and dreamt the same dream again.

CHAPTER V.

BLIND TRUST.

OUR friend Jerry woke on the following morning with that strange incomprehensible feeling which is common to all of us at certain times in our lives, the feeling that "something was going to happen."

At first he regarded the sensation with some of his superstition of the evening before, but after a little his usual common-sense prevailed. There is nothing more potent in destroying unhealthy fancies and ideas, in my opinion, than sunshine, and next to that, in Jerry's, a good breakfast.

Therefore it is not surprising that on descending to the parlour "the right way up"—much to the disappointment of the "bad" boy—and finding a substantial breakfast of eggs and ham, toast and coffee, provided for him by his admiring landlady—small wonder that the other lodgers, after such a scanty meal as their limited means could afford, passed the parlour with their nasal organ slightly elevated—it is not, I say, surprising that at the

sight of the good things set out for his benefit, with the morning sun making the homely plate and china service look brighter than ever any amount of rubbing and scrubbing could make it, Jerry was inclined to take a more cheerful view of the matter, indeed of things in general, than before, although he could not entirely shake off the strange impression which had come to him on waking.

He was more than sorry to know that, save for his last appearance, he would not enjoy the advantages of the engagement at the Gardens; but having sagely decided that it was no use crying over spilt milk, for more reasons than one he rejoiced at the fact that he was able to pay the visit he intended. At the same time he looked forward to being once more on the road, having fully made up his mind that nothing should prevent him from starting with the rest of the company.

He made this declaration to himself with great emphasis, perhaps to assure himself against any obstacle Mrs Parkins might raise; and though not expecting the scene which I have already described as following his presentation of the Dutch clock in lieu of the Chinese idol, he deemed it wise to make his farewell as short as possible. He therefore delayed even speaking of it until the last moment.

During his imprisonment he had paid some attention to his theatrical wardrobe, and provided himself with a new and gorgeous dress

of red, green, and yellow, a perfect marvel in its way. This he disposed into his small bag, together with such materials as were necessary for the tricks he intended to introduce, and he was ready to start for his work.

These slight preparations were made in almost boyish glee, so buoyant had his spirits become; and after many motherly injunctions from Mrs Parkins to take care of himself, and, for all the royal personages in the world, not to run any risk of future injury, he was at length allowed to depart.

Mrs Parkins would herself have been present at the show on this grand occasion, but for the fact that she and the Methodist pew-opener's sweetheart were elbow deep in a six-weeks' wash.

So Jerry, nothing loath to do so, started off alone. He had half a mind to wait for Lizette, that they might go together, but on second thoughts decided that he should take longer to perform the journey than she would. She might not like to go through the streets with him, limping and with a stick; besides, to say the real truth, so confused was he in his own mind as to what he had got to say to her, what he was going to do to keep himself from forcing from her some solution of the riddle which was so puzzling him, that he decided he had best see how things were first before he came to any conclusion at all.

Thus a little after one o'clock saw him walking

in the direction of the Gardens at a pretty good pace, far greater than he had expected to be able to assume. His foot responded right nobly to the impulse which bade him hasten.

After a little, however, he somewhat lessened his speed, for the idea had just occurred to him that perhaps a certain little lady might overtake him.

Nor were his hopes doomed to disappointment. About a quarter of an hour after he had started, he was watching with interest an angry altercation between the driver of an overloaded donkey cart and a very resolute policeman, when suddenly a slight girlish figure brushed by him, and before he could look round was already some paces in front of him.

For a few moments he was in doubt, then became suddenly conscious that fast-retreating form was she for whom he had been lingering—the slight figure, grey-robed no longer, but clad in a becoming costume of cheap cotton, brightened by Madame Petite's artistic fingers with a touch of gay ribbons, and wearing a little lace fichu sparkling with beads, which danced and glistened in the sunlight, a high-crowned hat covered with a mass of soft creamy lace and carelessly-arranged flowers crowning the head of soft brown curls, which Lizette had always hitherto, with a ruthless hand, done her best to reduce to order by means of a sober band of black velvet, but which now fell in confusion round the prettily-moulded neck—in all

such a dainty picture that it is small wonder that for the space of a few seconds Jerry almost came to a standstill on the pavement.

Of course, to one with his feelings, disguise ought to have been impossible; but, in truth, this sudden and totally unexpected transformation from a veritable little Quakeress to the gayest of dainty summer butterflies was enough to have taken away the breath of any one far more capable of sustaining a pleasant surprise than my hero.

There he stood like a booby, as he afterwards told himself, stock still on the pavement, no doubt to the annoyance of more than one hurrying passer-by—stood looking with all eyes—I mean with every scrap of vision power—concentrated upon the figure which was rapidly receding before him.

How long he would have remained thus—spell-bound by what was after all not such a very remarkable vision on a warm summer's day: only a pretty little girl in a very becoming cotton dress—it is impossible to say; but, fortunately for his personal safety and the tempers of those passengers in whose way he stood, before she had gone many steps Lizette stayed a moment to glance round her.

Whether she was expecting to meet some one, I cannot say; but luckily her action made her aware of Jerry's presence. In a moment she had retraced her steps, and with a pretty gesture of surprise—the like of which one might seek in vain

from the most graceful English girl—she held out both her hands to him with a smile of welcome which there was no mistaking.

“Is it my friend?” she asked, in a clear, glad voice.

Had Jerry been a reader of poetry he might have quoted some one else’s answer to this question, and said something about somebody trusting him in all things; but I am sorry to say that my hero’s taste for anything in the shape of rhyme did not extend any higher than a comic song, none of which at that moment occurred to him as being particularly appropriate to the occasion.

In lieu of these—from sheer force of habit (I am bound to relate the true facts of the case, in spite of their want of the varnish of romance) his answer was a well-worn ring phrase. As he shook with great heartiness the hand extended to him, he said,—

“Yes, here I am again.”

This not very striking ceremony over, he again became speechless, but, fortunately, was able to continue his interrupted walk with a decent show of regard to outward appearances, while his companion saved him the trouble of talking by monopolising the whole of the conversation herself, heartily expressing her gladness that he was well enough to make his reappearance, although she did not say she had missed him during his absence.

It was just as well she did talk on, for although Jerry was conscious of every word—broken as

some of them were—which fell from her lips, I doubt if he perfectly understood the same.

Not so many of the passers-by, who, attracted by the clear, silvery tones and quaintly-worded sentences which reached their ears, more than once turned and looked with not a little openly-expressed approval at the speaker, smiling at her very naïve utterances.

Jerry, as he walked along, smiled too—nay, more than once found himself laughing aloud, which, strangely enough, was just what he had said he should do when he should find himself in the little fancy-rider's presence, who would at once solve his riddle for him.

Where were his dismal forebodings now? What faith would he ever place in the common sense he had been wont to look upon as so infallible when, after brooding over silly fancies created by a half-silly fellow, he had done a little bit of conjuring, which was a far greater waste of time than the vanishing coin-trick, being, in fact, its very opposite, by conjuring up from his memory the face he loved, when it had been full of sorrow and weariness, so that it had haunted him even in his dreams?

Bah, how easily his silly trick had been exposed!

One glance at the daintily-clad figure beside him as completely dispelled his feverish illusion as does a gleam of summer sunshine disperse the gathering clouds.

Clouds! who speaks of anything so dismal?

Who would dare breathe such heresy as to say even the faintest shadow was overhead to dim this fairy-like creature's radiant happiness?

No wonder Jerry laughed so heartily at his folly.

What could have been a greater contrast to his gloomy visions of the night before than to see this real Lizette fairly dancing along in the sunshine by his side, in all the gaiety of her dainty costume of soft falling white material with its bright touches of ribbons and snowy lace; what have breathed more defiance at his strange remembrance of tear-bedimmed eyes and pale cheeks, than the pretty face and eyes sparkling with excitement, looking up at him so confidently from under that captivating little edifice of twisted straw and carelessly-entwined flowers?

What could have been a greater contrast, I say again? What, indeed! Unless it was the figure by her side, that of my poor hero, who seems to be bent on showing himself in his worst colours.

I say this with reason, and I think for once Jerry himself, as he took in all the details of the picture presented to his gaze, also became slightly conscious that he was scarcely in harmony with it.

So occupied had he been with what the view of "things" might be, and satisfied with his ring dress, that he completely forgot to pay any extra attention to his outside toilet. Thus behold him in his ill-fitting pepper-and-salt suit, which, like most of his clothes, looked as though it had been made for some one of far more robust proportions than himself, he not being able to afford a visit to

a first-class tailor's, though I doubt if even then, owing to some little defect in nature's intention when she moulded his manly form, a more satisfactory "fit" could have been obtained—the said suit, owing to his have worn it constantly during his imprisonment, and as I having already said, been subject to some alterations for the better indulgence of his sleight-of-hand propensities, being somewhat "baggy" in appearance. His necktie had once been of a bright crimson in colour, ornamented with a profusion of large yellow horse-shoes, but time had mercifully reduced its brightness to a far less appalling hue. This appendage, as my reader will no doubt imagine, from the circumstances under which he was placed, had as usual sought the vicinity of his right ear, where it stuck up with fiery stiffness, while his hat, in compliance with his custom when enjoying a leisurely stroll, was tilted slightly at the back of his head, completing an *ensemble* which by the greatest stretch of imagination I can hardly describe as artistic or stylish.

Not accustomed to regard his beauty as that of the Adonis type, Jerry did not attempt to disguise from himself that the meaning of several glances which he saw turn from him to his companion and back again was hardly of a complimentary nature to himself. In fact, he did not feel at all disconcerted when he heard a tall, fashionably-dressed young swell with stick, collar, eyeglass, waxed moustache, false teeth, carefully curled hair, crimson silk handkerchief and all, say to a companion,

in that languid drawl which is such a mark of good breeding and blue blood, after a prolonged stare at the little fancy-rider, which was a distinct denial of both, "What a deuced queer couple! They're not 'spoons,' I should think. Devilish pretty girl; but what a cut for a man! Makes one think that fellow Darwin knew something after all."

Even if Jerry had been well read enough to have understood the meaning of the reference to the exponent of the man *versus* monkey theory, I do not suppose his honesty of nature would have allowed him to resent very greatly the inference. Instead he was taken up with stealing admiring glances at Lizette as she tripped along beside him, heartily, but in less coarse language, endorsing the bold criticism of her; and while he could not resist a sigh that it was not only outwardly that the contrast was so great, his heart was full of unselfish happiness that the fears which he had entertained were so unfounded.

So on the two walked, chatting gaily as they had so often done in days gone by, only that every now and then Lizette would glance round her quickly, as though expecting to see another friend, noting which, Jerry at once began to cast about for some excuse by means of which he should be able to escape spoiling the lovers' *tête-à-tête*, should there be any addition to the party.

He might, however, have spared himself the trouble of planning this manœuvre, for the cause for it did not appear; and though he thought he

could detect a gleam of disappointment in the laughing brown eyes, Lizette talked on as gaily as ever until they entered the gardens.

Here, upon passing through the gates, Jerry saw the announcement of the two performances of the show, in which for the last time the greatest attractions were to be set forth. Among the many wonders so gorgeously announced in flaming letters, he found himself described as the world-renowned conjuring clown (the importance that this glaring advertisement gave to his attempts in the magic art!), and in larger letters than all was announced Miss Rosa Petman's marvellous performance on the well-known "fire horse" Bonfire, in which she would ride him among lighted lamps, and over blazing five-barred gates.

"By jingo!" said Jerry, reading this last announcement through; "the guv'nor means to make a dash this time. This ought to fetch 'em, royalty and all, if anything would. It's a strong enough bill for anything."

Jerry, of course, being an old hand, was allowing in his calculations for the deluding charms of adjectives and notes of exclamation, which were, as usual, liberally displayed in the aforesaid advertisement.

"Where does Bonfire come from?" he went on, turning to Lizette for information. "One of my friend Daystar's *aliases*? But I don't think even the guv'nor, much less his daughter, would make him take to this trick."

"No," said Lizette, rather absently stroking

down the folds of her dress. "He was belonging to Monsieur Detrop, where I and my father were before I came here. He is a beautiful horse. Monsieur trained him himself. He was very clever at it, and could make Bonfire behave so well that the people would wave their handkerchiefs and shout. Monsieur was very kind to me. He used to teach me to ride Bonfire sometimes; it was easy. He would say, 'Don't have ze fear, and he will be good horse; but if he feel you—what you call—shrink, he will shrink too, and zen it will be—what they say, "All up."'" (This with another of those pretty gestures which made her chatting so charming.)

So Jerry thought, and half expressed as much in his look of honest admiration.

"Then you and this famous Bonfire are old friends?" he said. "Mr Detrop was good to teach you his tricks."

"Ah, there was not much to do, if you did not shrink and held him like Monsieur showed me how. He said to my father that one day he would let me have him, but, I do not know how it was, Madame did not like that I should learn. She was too fearful to do so herself; but, as I say to her, I am young, I do not mind, and she was so angry."

Jerry could not help laughing at the very innocent wonderment with which this statement was made, but promptly agreed that he saw no reason why her husband's kindness to his old friend's child should have roused Madame's wrath.

"She did not mean to be unkind," went on Lizette, "but when my father died, and I went to ask Monsieur to give me a turn, he said 'Yes,' but Madame said 'No,' and so I went on trying to get something to do, until I came here and found you. Since then I have not had to worry."

At first Jerry felt very much inclined to rebel that that "personal pronoun" was not his own property, but after a moment gave up the idea and took to wondering how it was, even while she had been friendless and worried in the big world, Lizette had been able to retain her child-like faith in her fellow-creatures.

"And now," went on Lizette, in her queer way, "Monsieur is dead (why is it, I wonder, people die? I wish they wouldn't), and Madame has sold the good Bonfire to Mr Petman."

"And Miss Petman is to ride him. Well, she's plucky enough for anything. I don't think she will shrink."

Lizette did not reply. Her face was not visible to Jerry as she was looking round her, and perhaps did not hear his remark. When she again turned her head Jerry glanced at her face. He was surprised to see on it a look which he could not quite understand. Following the direction of her eyes, he found them gazing after a tall figure which was walking rather quickly on the reverse side of the way, and some few paces in front of them.

We will not stop to ascertain why there should have been so much disappointment and vexation

in Lizette's looks from what was evidently a trifle, which would cause her lover as much annoyance as herself, viz., having missed seeing her among the crowd which was pouring in at the Garden gates.

Silly child, how absurd to be cast down at what was so easily remedied.

Why, even Jerry, who had sought in vain for a way to make an opportunity to ask a question on which his life's happiness depended, was equal to an occasion like this.

Without betraying consciousness that he had noticed anything amiss, he effected a manœuvre which would have done credit to a far more skilled diplomatist. Artfully declaring his watch to be fully half-an-hour faster than the hands indicated, he advised his companion to hasten her steps, he doing likewise.

Thus, at a pretty smart pace for an invalid, he led the way until the tall figure on the opposite side of the road had been distanced by several yards, a method of proceeding which did not escape that gentleman's notice; and while it might have set Lizette's fears at rest—if she had any—lest Jerry had noticed her annoyance at the *contretemps*, it also recalled it a second time.

This, however, was once more dispelled when, pleading something about his foot paining him, Jerry indicated a short cut to the circus ground, to reach which it was necessary to cross the road.

Having done this he either became confused in his geography of the Gardens or troubled all of a

sudden with a remarkably short memory, both for the pain in his foot and his suggestion, for he made no further allusion to any short cut, with the result that in a few moments, on casting a furtive glance behind him to see how his plans were succeeding, he was able to discover with the greatest *naiveté* the presence of the ring-master, who also looked a little surprised at this meeting with his lady-love, "totally unexpected as it was, of course," thought the skilful diplomatist.

So engrossed was the latter in congratulating himself on the success of his stratagem that he forgot to notice the greeting between the lovers, though he did think during the remainder of the walk that perhaps they would have felt more at their ease had he been able to have relieved them of his presence.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CLOUD.

LIZETTE seemed to Jerry a trifle conscious and nervous at the meeting, and the ring-master too was a little less unconcerned than usual. Jerry was not sorry when at length the circus tents were reached, whither already not a small crowd was flocking.

Jerry suddenly announced his intention of seeking Mr Petman prior to the performance, and as that gentleman was sure at that time to be found at the pay boxes, it was necessary for him to make his way thither, and enter at the shilling entrance-gate, instead of going on to the stables.

Truth to tell, it had suddenly occurred to him that in the five minutes' walk from the reserved-seat entrance to the stables there was yet time for one of those little chats in which lovers so easily explain away any little misunderstanding which has occurred. Accordingly he made the excuse that he wished to report himself to the manager, and leaving the lovers to continue their way alone, sought that gentleman and found him, as he had conjectured, keeping guard over the pay boxes.

Grand preparations, rivalling even those of the opening day, had been made for the expected honoured guests, who, however, had not yet put in an appearance, though they had signified their intention of visiting the Gardens some time during the day.

This fact becoming known, a general rush was made for seats at the hippodrome, which was already well filled ; but still the royal personages were not even within sight of the Gardens' gate. Mr Petman had been privately informed that their Highnesses were at the moment indulging in a quiet after-luncheon doze, warrantable after their exertions of the morning, namely, their able assistance in opening the railway line. Thus it was not expected they would reach the Gardens until the hippodrome was over.

Like a wise man, however, he locked this information in his own breast and did not abate one jot his preparations for their coming, which had had such a magical effect in filling his seats—and his coffers at the same time ; but meanwhile, as usual, he vented his spleen on any one and every one who came within his reach.

On our hero making his way through the crowds which pressed so eagerly round the entrance, he was greeted far less affably than on the day before. It seemed that in spite of the rapidity with which the treasury was filling, the worthy manager somewhat regretted the very liberal offer which he had made for the clown's service.

He made a good many lame excuses relative to

its being very unwise to disobey the doctor's orders to any great extent, the upshot of which was that he did not wish to afford the extra payment which he had promised for two performances.

"It doesn't seem that the grandees are likely to show up, but don't go babbling it, or the people 'll wait till to-night; and if they don't know, perhaps they'll come to both shows. So as there's no reason for having such a long programme, I think you had better be 'cut out' till to-night."

Not in the least hurt that his services could be so easily dispensed with, nay, rather thanking Mr Petman for his kindly consideration, Jerry consented to be "cut out," determining to shine with double brilliancy when he did at last appear, for after all the tent performances gave him far more chance than those in the hippodrome, where his antics were hardly seen by those in the outer-circle seats, his voice every now and then carried away by the breeze, to say nothing of its being hardly calculated to make one witty when that same breeze was a stiff nor'-easter, which, if not cold for the spectators, who in most cases were well sheltered and of course well clad, was sufficient to make itself felt by any one in a lighter costume.

So quietly acquiescing in the manager's arrangement, Jerry determined to witness the show as a spectator only, imagining he might get some fun out of the criticisms which he might hear passed upon his fellows.

For this reason he made his way, not into the more select reserved seats, from which a "how clever," "beautiful creature," "very funny," might be all the expressions good breeding would allow, but into the free seats, where freer vent would be given to the feelings.

Here quite by chance he took his stand just inside the race-course railings, for it was useless to expect to find a vacant seat, and just behind him, seated in a row, were a party of girls, who were evidently bent on enjoying themselves to the utmost.

By some skilful manœuvre they had succeeded in gaining an excellent position, which they now occupied with great complacency, seated along in a row regaling themselves with those squares of cake which the refreshment stalls provided for the sum of one penny. From their remarks it appeared that they were *habituées* of the show, and Jerry was highly amused at the business-like way in which they discussed the performance.

"Any appearance of the royal personages?" asked one.

"No," was the reply. "I wonder they don't dress up some of the grooms and let them occupy the seats of honour, just for the look of the thing."

At that moment the performance began. There was nothing in it which excited particular notice, but the girls were not slow to observe that Epsom—by the way he lashed and urged on Daredevil, swearing at him hotly under his breath—was evidently in no good temper, and readily accounted

for the fact by some anecdote which was recalled with much merriment; to note a kindly act from one of the elder members of the Jelli family to a smaller brother, who was more than usually nervous; at the same time watching with a vigilant eye the famous weight-thrower, resolutely refusing to believe that his weights were solid; and paying strict attention to little details in a way which showed Jerry that every one at least in the audience is not so ignorant of the life behind the scenes as some people imagine.

The young ring-master's appearance was liberally discussed by them in a laughing, school-girl fashion, the verdict being that he looked decidedly handsome in his hippodrome dress of scarlet and white already described. To this all agreed but one, who maintained that good-looking as he certainly was, there was something about his face, in spite of the regular features, curling hair, and fine grey eyes, which did not impress her favourably.

"If he wore a moustache he would be all right, perhaps, for then he would hide that nasty little droop of his mouth at the corner."

"And what has that to do with it?" asked another of the girls impatiently.

"I believe he's either indolent and cowardly, or—"

A burst of laughter interrupted this sage remark, and the speaker was unmercifully teased for her attempt at reading character, until it was discovered that in the excitement of the dis-

cussion the youngest of the merry party had managed to let her cake fall from her hand into the much-trimmed crown of a lady's bonnet seated just below them.

This incident led to more merriment of a catching if not boisterous kind, and the means suggested by each of the girls in turn to dislodge the lost morsel from its position caused Jerry to give up the keen glance which since their former remarks he had bestowed upon the object of their criticism and, laughing at himself for having paid any heed to the assumed knowledge of a school-girl, lend an ear once more to their chatter, which, although they spoke in subdued tones and kept their mirth within bounds as much as possible, he was just able to catch.

It was truly comical to hear the expedients proposed for the rescue of the cake—wishes for a toasting-fork, a fishing-rod, a pair of tongs, a pug dog, being among the many implements suggested for its restoration ; and the silly but harmless fun reached its height when, by a sudden movement of the unconscious old lady in front, the morsel was precipitated from her bonnet into the lap of a lean, hungry-looking boy in front of her. Even Jerry could not help laughing to see this youth pick up the dainty with reverent fingers, evidently thinking it had dropped from the skies for his refreshment, and spreading a greasy paper over his knees to catch the crumbs, eat it in small mouthfuls, expressive of great enjoyment.

Having watched this process with much in-

terest, and regretted among themselves that they had no more of the cake left to offer him—which perhaps after all was as well, as too many luxuries might have had the effect of making him ill, as one of them remarked with convincing gravity—the girls once more turned their attention to the performance.

The riders in the ladies' flat race were just taking their places, when the presence of a stranger in the place of the little Frenchwoman was at once noted.

"Blue, pink, green, red, and orange and black! Who is the girl in the striped jacket? she puts all the others in the shade." "A very pretty jacket: she knows what suits her." "Why, it's the girl who rides the roan, the one who wears the velvet habit—Miss Petman, of course."

This fact being unanimously settled, the girls began laughingly to decide in which of the riders they placed the most faith. The odds, as Jerry noticed, were in favour of the striped jacket, more especially as Daystar's prowess seemed well known, two of the girls only being resolute in their allegiance to "red," calling to remembrance more than one bet that they had had with a certain cousin Jack, the stakes being merely a pound of chocolate creams or some other sweet dainty.

Jerry, as he listened to this declaration in Lizette's favour, smiled to himself to see how even upon outsiders the little fancy-rider made a pleasant impression, and heartily delighted within

himself with the frank expressions of approval which were bestowed upon her appearance, which it was agreed was quite on a par with that of the manager's daughter, although that lady had the advantage of an entirely new and striking costume, while Lizette's scarlet jacket and cap were by no means as fresh as they had been that day when in them she had "captivated so many hearts and one above all."

"There she is—Miss Hartzmann, I mean—that pretty girl in red with the brown curly hair," said one of the observing girls. "I think she is sweet. Miss Petnan is handsome, but in quite another style, as Madame Pincenez would say—I stick to red."

Just then the signal was given, and in a few minutes the race won.

At first all the riders, as usual, were pretty even, then as the second round of the course was made, two shot ahead, the scarlet, and the crimson and blue, the former a little in front.

For a little way red did not seem to be aware who it was so close behind her, but a quick glance round soon made her aware of the roan's near presence.

Evidently she who had been victorious so many times before had no wish to forego her honours even to the manager's daughter. A flush of excitement spread suddenly over her face, a bright look came into her eyes, and one could tell by the way she tightened her grasp of the reins that she meant to fight valiantly.

On went the two horses—neck to neck—amidst the shouts of the spectators, while Jerry heard one of the girls remark in a tone of apprehension that “red” was doing just what cousin Jack had before called her wise for not doing, namely, letting her horse “go” at first, instead of saving him till the last round. At least such was cousin Jack’s opinion in the matter.

And it seemed as if the theory was a true one, for already at the beginning of the second round Daystar had the advantage.

“Red! Blue! Blue! Red!” went the shouts from the big crowd gathered in the enclosure, with as much enthusiasm as when, on the first day, they had witnessed the mimic struggle, even Jerry sharing in the general excitement.

The contest was soon decided. Just when it seemed certain that Blue would be the victor, Red gained a few steps, in response to which Daystar received a reminder of what was expected of him by a sharp cut with the whip.

The blow was ill-advised. The animal was not used to this style of performance, and after so far putting his feelings into his pocket and doing his duty quietly, he objected to be chastised without a cause.

He was not slow to show his feelings by shying violently, and in a manner which nearly resulted in unseating his rider, and taking advantage of the opportunity, the red jacket slipped by and reached the winning-post amidst the usual cheers of victory.

Had Daystar's conduct had no cause, no doubt the wearer of the crimson and blue jacket might have received some commiseration, instead of which more than one coarse laugh of some one who had betted against her, was raised, and only drowned by the applause which was bestowed upon her lucky rival as she made the circle of the ring.

Meanwhile, under pretence of assisting her to alight, the ring-master had made his way to Miss Petman's side: they stood talking together, then each glanced a little anxiously round, and then turned together hastily in the direction of the ante-room.

The winner of the race noticed this, and the look of excitement died slowly out of her face while she followed them with her eyes.

"I was afraid she was going to beat you," said Smith, who, as usual, was at hand with his congratulations and dog-like attentions. "Daystar was even with her for once."

"Yes; it was not Miss Petman's fault," said Lizette a little absently; "I wish I had let her win."

"Let her win!" repeated the groom, but made no further comment, no doubt because it was quite beyond his comprehension that any one should be willing to forego so brilliant a victory, and stroking down the Turk's neck with a rough but gentle hand, he led the way from the course.

Jerry followed in their wake.

Reaching the ante-room he found Lizette had

vanished, while Miss Petman stood still talking eagerly to Carl Hermann in a low tone, but with an excitement which, if, as was most likely, she was discussing with him the lately-contested race, was hardly necessary, and certainly boded no good to the real winner, who, however, no doubt had a staunch defender in her lover.

Whatever was the subject, it is certain both the speakers were somewhat eager and excited, and remained so until suddenly Mr Petman's voice, raised high in loud reproof of one of the grooms, heralded that gentleman's approach.

No doubt fearing that he might say something relative to her failure, the manager's daughter, although not usually by her manner given to express much awe of her hot-tempered parent, hastened out of the tent.

Before doing so she stopped, summoned the ring-master once more to her side, and whispered something to him.

He did not appear to answer directly, but played thoughtfully with the thong of his whip, whereupon she frowned and added something with evident anger, which made him colour also, and with some laughing comments they parted.

A few moments later Lizette entered, and from where he stood chatting to Smith, Jerry saw her blush vividly as Carl Hermann greeted her, and he watched with interest the two as they stood chatting, the ring-master with a gaiety which sat well upon him because it was unusual, no doubt part of his character as a happy lover, Lizette as shy as

ever, but with a more than usually bright light beaming in her eyes.

So they stood until, the interval over, the former was obliged to return to his duties.

Mr Petman had meanwhile been creating as much disturbance as it is possible for one man over a lot of nervous supernumeraries, to do.

By-and-by, when the men were in the ring again, Jerry was alone in the ante-room with Lizette. He wondered whether he might venture to approach the little fancy-rider, afraid lest he should disturb pleasant thoughts such as the bright look on her face seemed to tell of.

Before, however, he could make up his mind, Mr Petman had taken upon himself that office.

Going up to where Lizette stood he remarked, with an ugly leer such as he was wont to precede his clumsy attempts at affability with, "So you managed to make the Turk cut out Daystar, did you? Rose didn't like that, I bet; but it does her good to be taken down a peg or two sometimes. I'd let her see that you've got as much pluck as her always if I were you. I thought she'd have beaten, but I suppose I was taken in a bit."

After this not very explicit speech he nodded with intended knowingness and passed on, and when Jerry turned Lizette had also left the tent. He went out once more into the race-course.

Nothing of consequence occurred to interest him particularly until the chariot race. Then it happened that as the clumsy vehicles were got

into line Lizette found some difficulty in reducing her fiery steeds to order.

The ring-master stood ready to give the start, but paused a moment, and calling to her to drive a little way along the course, evidently tried to discover what was the cause of the horses' unusual behaviour.

"Stop a little," he called in German; "there is something not right." With a lover's anxiety he himself paid some attention to the harness, and in a few moments Lizette was able to go back to her place.

As she gathered up the reins she was no doubt uttering her thanks, and more than once turned her head to call over her shoulder some remark to her countryman in her own language, which while it puzzled Jerry made him think how softly and sweetly it fell from the pretty red lips.

The start was given and away went the heavy chariots, thundering along in a most ungainly fashion, while the breeze carried out the Roman robes which the drivers wore, like sails behind them.

All went well until the commencement of the second round, when failing to effect a manœuvre by which it was intended to reach the inside edge of the course the wheels of two of the vehicles became locked. For a moment, in spite of the danger which they ran by so doing, neither of the ladies seemed inclined to give way, until it seemed that so interlocked had they become that it was difficult to say which it would be the safest to do

—stop or go on, trusting to the end of the race for the grooms to bring the tearing horses to a standstill simultaneously; but one thing was certain, neither could win while thus clogged, and as till now the race had lain between them, great excitement prevailed as to who would give way.

It was soon decided. One of the girls glanced round as though about to make some remark to her rival, seemed to change her mind and look quickly from side to side of the course and then down at the wheels. The next moment, by a skilful movement which many a better-trained coachman might have applauded, she urged her horses forward, and by a touch of the whip avoided the accident which seemed imminent by turning the obedient animals across the course, resigning thus her chance of winning, but earning a burst of applause from the spectators which was as well merited for the unselfishness of the act as for its prompt skill.

Bowing and laughing gaily Lizette—for she it was—drove quickly back to the starting-point, where Carl Hermann assisted her to alight, again addressing her in German.

So they stood until the race was won, Miss Petman coming in first, but hardly receiving as much applause as the little fancy-rider had done, which seemed to cause her some annoyance, and, again, no doubt with the idea of spoiling the lovers' *tête-à-tête*, she beckoned the ring-master to her, and again seemed to address him rather angrily.

In a few moments, however, he managed to make his escape, while the manager's daughter hastened off to her dressing-room to prepare for what was to be the greatest feature in the show—her introduction of the fire-horse.

Much excitement was evinced when she made her appearance in the ring, clad in a handsome habit of dark green velvet, which had been dipped in some solution, as advised by the late Mr Detrop, to prevent any danger of catching fire, and on her head, suiting her dark handsome face to perfection, a large hat of the same colour and material, ornamented by sweeping plumes of white feathers.

The horse was for a trick horse an unusually fine one, and altogether the new feature promised to fulfil the hopes entertained of it.

The first portion of the performance was greeted with well-deserved applause, and with a smile of satisfaction Miss Petman bowed her acknowledgment. When, however, it came to the fiery portion of the same, and to prove that he deserved his name, Bonfire had to go through his tricks surrounded by flaming bowls of fire both on the ground and above his head, the well-trained animal began to show signs of rebellion, and it was only after a good deal of temper exhibited by both he and his mistress that he could be induced to behave himself; even then, instead of galloping, waltzing, and marching between the flaming bowls, he sidled away from them in anything but a graceful manner.

In this state of things it was natural that some anxiety was evinced as to how the crowning feat of all was to be accomplished.

"By Jove! won't the guv'nor swear if she makes a hash of it," said Will Breakneck, who, in his suit of dark blue, looked singularly limp and ordinary after his usual smart appearance in the ring. "If she hashes it we'd best look out, and — me if I don't think she will. She's got more than her match in this beast, I bet. Why—"

He paused and looked significantly at his brother, who glanced quickly in the direction of the ring-master, as he stood not many feet distant, watching with Lizette the performance then going on. An angry look came into the young German's face. He turned abruptly away from his companion, and, as two of the grooms went into the ring carrying two gates, the top bar of which was roughly bound with pieces of matting and smeared with a light covering of pitch, called somewhat sharply to the acrobat to come and help support one of the gates.

"By jingo! Madame Fourteenstone is quite right," said that gentleman. "There'll be such a jolly row soon. What do you think?"

"Why, that you needn't be afraid to hold the hurdles. You won't burn your fingers half so much as some one else will."

But though the speaker of course alluded to the young ring-master, who had already taken from one of the grooms the lighted torch which he had brought, he glanced curiously at Lizette.

She, however, was too much occupied in watching what went on in the ring, no doubt apprehensive of the conduct of her late master's pupil, to notice the look.

The gates were fastened by ropes some few inches long to the ring side, a precaution necessary to prevent them harming the velvet cushion, and were held by a similar appendage by some one within the ring, in this instance Carl Hermann, who had no doubt been desired to fill this rather important office by Mr Petman, and Will Break-neck.

At first Bonfire was made to get up his speed by leaping the gates as they were; then, at a signal from his rider, the torch was applied, and in an instant the top bar was ablaze.

"Hi! hi!" called Miss Petman, seating herself firmly, and grasping the reins with a determined hand, as she set the horse at the flaming barrier.

Bonfire, good horse that he was, made a good start, but no sooner did he come within a few paces of the required leap than he swerved and capered round into the middle of the ring.

No doubt thinking it best to encourage this whim, at first Miss Petman rode him back a little, then again made a start, but again only to have him swerve.

Once, twice, thrice this happened, and by the fourth time the audience, whose patience had been somewhat tried by the non-appearance of the royal personages, began to giggle and offer

voluntary advice, which even the encouraging applause could not drown.

It was plain that both horse and rider were also out of temper, and a severe struggle for mastery went on, while the fire on the gates burnt quickly lower and lower.

No doubt determined at any cost to take him over the hurdles, alight or not, Miss Petman put the now completely roused animal once more at the leap, when he hesitated bringing her whip down with some force over his ears. Quick to resent such treatment, the brute shied, reared violently, and entirely gave way to every sign of displeasure.

Though as a rule plucky enough, Miss Petman, under the continued rearing and plunging, seemed to lose all nerve and cling to the saddle and reins in a manner which did not tend to decrease Bonfire's ill-temper.

Will Breakneck and Carl Hermann had by this time got out of the ring, which was by no means the safest place while those strong iron hoofs were flung so indiscriminately into the air.

Seeing that Miss Petman was, however, beginning to lose control over herself as well as her steed, and that it was useless any longer to prolong the performance, Carl Hermann called hastily to some of the grooms to go and secure the horse and lead him from the ring.

"It's all very well to call us to go. I ain't going to risk having my shins broken for him nor nobody. Why don't he go himself? It's his

place, I guess. What do you say, Smith? But, there, he's too much of a coward; he ain't got no more pluck than a baby."

Smith did not answer; but there was a queer look on his face, which closely resembled that which had illuminated it when he had paid Jerry a visit the day before. It was impossible to say what the look might mean, but he did not stir to go to Miss Petman's aid.

A repetition of the command, however, uttered with far greater force than the young German usually exerted himself to use, but which was now necessary, as the laughter and jeers, especially from the free seats, were gradually getting louder, and Bonfire still refused to be reduced to order, caused some of the rest to obey, very unwillingly, it must be confessed. But even then the horse refused to do anything but retire into the ante-room, still rearing and plunging, while the band struck up "God save the Queen," and, commenting in a not very complimentary manner on the last feature of the performance, the vast audience streamed out of the place.

But even within the ante-room Bonfire proved himself so resolute in his bad behaviour, that, in spite of all the grooms could do, he resolutely refused to stand still while his rider dismounted.

Mr Petman was frantic—bullied, swore, and threatened at all the grooms in turn, who, however, all retreated before the unmanageable brute's capers.

How long matters would have gone on like

this it is impossible to say, but after nearly every one in turn had made an effort to bring it to an end, but unsuccessfully—only the ring-master and Mr Petman contenting themselves with urging the others on—suddenly Lizette, who had been watching what went on with a rather fearful look on her face, stepped forward and whispered something to Smith. He hesitated a moment, glanced from the speaker to the horse's rider, and back again, then suddenly stepped forward and laid a hand on Bonfire's bridle, while at the same time Lizette put her hand over his eyes, and saying something in French in a low, soothing tone, fearlessly patted his arched neck, at the risk of a kick from one of the muscular legs.

The effect, if not instantaneous, was in a few minutes to reduce the animal to sufficient order to allow his rider to dismount, which she did, looking much relieved and not a little disarranged by the late struggle. Then Mr Petman stormed with fresh ardour, and the girl, not a little put out at the failure of her performance, also gave her tongue liberty, and some very sharp sayings passed between father and daughter.

At length Mr Petman seemed to get the worst of it, and he turned away with an oath.

"You're a — fool, Rose—disgraced the show. Every one was laughing at you. Supposing we'd have had the visitors we expected, a nice mess you'd have made. As like as not if it gets to their ears they won't come, and — take it, it'll mean twenty per cent. off the takings. After all

the practice you've had—to make such a fool of yourself; why, a baby could do better!”

“Then you'd better let one try. I'm —— if I'll mount the horse again.”

Miss Petman turned as she spoke to leave the tent. Her eye fell upon Lizette, who was still talking and soothing Bonfire's aggrieved feelings.

“Why don't you let Miss Hartzmann ride him? She seems to know more about the brute than I do. I tell you I won't ride him to-night, so you'd better let her.”

“—— it and you to, so I will,” said the manager, with unnecessary emphasis. Turning to Lizette, he said with equal violence, “Look here; I've no doubt you could make as big a fool of yourself as Rose, if you liked. Give us the performance to-night as it ought to be. You've got plenty of pluck, I know, and I'll make it worth your while. Will you do it?”

Lizette hesitated, looking half anxiously round for some one to advise her. She was evidently loath to show her superiority over Miss Petman by accepting the offer—which, as we know, she was quite capable of doing—but at the same time she feared to risk the manager's more potent displeasure by refusing. In her dilemma she glanced first at Bonfire's late rider—who returned the look with cool defiance—and then at Carl Hermann, who, however, was talking to one of the grooms, and apparently did not know of the claim upon his attention.

“Well,” said Mr Petman impatiently, “do you

feel inclined to let her see that you're as good as she is?" This with an ugly leer.

"I should be sorry," began Lizette, finding she must speak, "very sorry to take Miss Petman's place, and I will willingly show her what I know about Bonfire, if she will let me."

"Thank you, Miss Hartzmann," replied that lady coldly; "I would rather not lay myself under any obligation to you by profiting by your lessons. Madame Detrop's advice failed. I do not think you are likely to succeed. But you are perfectly at liberty to prove your superiority over me if you wish to do so."

There was an ugly sneer on her handsome face as the manager's daughter repeated her father's words, which brought a sudden flush to her listener's face.

For a moment Lizette's eyes sought the ground, then she said very quietly, as though eager to put an end to what might develop into a quarrel, "Thank you for saying you will not mind my trying; but Bonfire and I are old friends. Monsieur Detrop taught me to ride him when I was at his circus."

This admission, made without the slightest show of ill-temper or sarcasm, completely settled the matter.

Miss Petman swept out of the tent with a gesture of annoyance, saying something to Carl Hermann as she passed him; and Mr Petman hastened to make a few necessary arrangements for the next performance. "You had better try

the beast now," he said to Lizette, as she still lingered patting Bonfire, who submitted quietly to her caresses, as though recognising an old friend, and behaved in a most exemplary manner when she put him through a few tricks in the now deserted enclosure.

This done, she hastened to the dressing-room to change her habit, and afterwards paid Madame Petite a visit to consult her as to the costume she should wear for her new performance in the evening. The good-natured old Frenchwoman, though far from well with a bad attack of rheumatics, exerted herself to enter thoroughly into the plan, and once more ransacked her wardrobe for what was required. By a little manœuvring a dress was devised, and in high glee Lizette despatched it to the Gardens by her faithful servant, Smith, and went home to her dinner. On her way she looked in at Jerry's lodgings, just after the episode of the Dutch clock already described.

In spite, however, of his being a trifle upset by what had lately occurred, the clown was delighted at the opportunity which chance had given his little friend of what he called "a rise," though it was at some one else's expense.

As he told Lizette, Miss Petman would lose nothing by it; and if her father was put out for the time being, she knew well enough how to bring him round, for it was a well-known fact that the manager's daughter was heir to a neat little sum—should an old aunt die—as she certainly would before very long, being already

seventy-five years of age. The rest of the day went by quickly enough, and once again Jerry started out for the Gardens, this time without any dismal forebodings, but looking forward not only to his own pleasure on his re-appearance, but to Lizette's success in her new performance on Bonfire.

And once again, as he walked with a brisk step through the streets, he saw the lovers on in front of him; and while they, of course, went the longest way round, he took a short cut on purpose to avoid overtaking them.

As he walked Jerry's thoughts were the happiest he had known for some weeks; he never gave his injured foot a thought, but strolled along as usual with his hands in his pockets, whistling gaily through sheer lightheartedness.

Where were all his idle fancies now? Only fit for some pampered mind, and due, no doubt, to his long imprisonment—encouraged, of course, by Smith's mysterious hints.

On the morrow he would see the groom, and rate him soundly for his absurdity.

The Gardens were crowded; and as the royal personages, having felt themselves sufficiently refreshed by their royal snooze to pay the expected visit, had announced their intention of witnessing the performance in the circus, everything promised well for a most agreeable evening for all concerned.

Jerry stood for a few moments chatting with Mr Petman, watching the crowds pushing their

way in at the various entrances to the monster tent, and feeling his spirits rise ; while he looked forward with an eagerness he had rarely felt before to hearing peal after peal of laughter follow his antics in the ring.

But I don't think even this fact was quite the reason of his very contented frame of mind ; it was his great love and unselfishness which caused him to forget his own troubles because some one whom he loved was happy, for while he had stood there watching the audience throng in, Lizette and the young ring-master had passed—he smiling down at her from his superior height, and she looking up at him with eyes and ears and heart for no one else.

Mr Petman also saw them, and looked after them with a keen look in his face. No doubt he was thinking whether he had been wise to trust to this little fancy-rider, and on such an important occasion, the valuable trick horse which he had bought specially for his daughter.

“She's a fool,” he muttered to himself ; “but if she tries any of her tricks, I'll let her see what I'm made of.”

The next moment he was all smiles and bows, as he led the way for some well-dressed ladies to the reserved stalls, which had been cushioned and covered for this time only—a place of honour again reserved for the royal personages, who had not yet arrived—and this office accomplished, flew out into a series of doubly-distilled oaths because, the free seats being full, two women and their

husbands, with three children apiece, had asked if "all children must be paid for in the reserved seats?"

"It's the only holiday as Jem and Jack can get," said one of the women, nearly smothering her baby in her efforts to make it cease crying, of which vent for its feelings it was hard to deny it, after it had been carried about in the hot sun without an interval of repose for fully three hours, while its mother explored the delights of the Gardens, a visit to which was to be the event in a year of drudgery. "It's the only holiday Jem and Jack gets, nor, for the like of that, me and Jane either, and we can't afford to pay for leaving the babies at home."

"And I can't afford to have my seats taken up by a lot of brawling little brats as ain't paid for."

"We'd take up as little room as possible, sir," answered the other woman. "Me and Jem and Jack 'd take one of 'm on our knees apiece, and the other two could easy sit on one chair, they ain't very fat—times ain't good enough for that—or they might stand."

There did not seem much prospect of either of the parents enjoying the show with a big if not fat child on his or her knee, especially after the long tramp in the hot sun, while the allusion to hard times having to do with the want of substance in the remaining portion of the family, was enough to have touched any heart save, of course, the manager's.

It was not to be expected he would be touched, he never having known what hard times were.

He rearranged his tie carelessly for the better display of a gorgeous emerald pin, gave a sly glance from his one eye at the rapidly-filling till over which he mounted guard, and said with great dignity:—

“Let ’em stand! Not if I know it. Either you pays or you don’t. So you’d best make up your minds which it’s to be, and not rob me by standing in the way of folks as can do the thing in style.”

“Oh sir,” put in the younger of the women pleadingly, “we wouldn’t mind if it was right at the back we had to sit. We meant to have got in to the free seats, but the children got so frightened when the push came we had to stand back; and I’m sure, sir, every one of the seats won’t fill, and you’ll never be none the worse for letting us by.”

Any allusion to empty seats was like fire to gunpowder to Mr Petman.

“What the devil is it to do with you whether the seats fill or not? Devil take yer, if I have any more of yer impudence, I’ll see you turned out of the Gardens, ay, you and your brats too, d—— me if I don’t!” he cried furiously.

At this, one of the men showed serious signs of resenting the insults offered to his wife. He gave the manager a few home truths in a style as forcible as his own, squared his shoulders in no idle pretence of having it out there and then,

and it might have gone somewhat hardly with that worthy had not the women hung upon their defender with many entreaties and sobs, and bade him desist. This at first he did not seem inclined to do; his hot workman's blood was up, and though he would have secretly felt no sympathy with Mr Petman had he paid in this instance for many like pieces of cruel and unnecessary harshness, Jerry knowing well who in the end would get the worst of the bargain, thought it best to set matters to rights.

He quickly slipped round to the side of the would-be combatant, and told him not to be a fool, to leave the matter to him (Jerry) and it would be all right; also to take his family to the drinking-fountain a little distance from the entrance, and there wait.

His authoritative manner stamping him as some one of importance, the man seemed inclined to rely upon him, and fortunately at that moment Mr Petman's attention was claimed by one of the grooms. Thus a nasty row was avoided.

True to his word, as soon as he was able to get near the pay-box, round which a crowd still gathered, Jerry purchased eight tickets, which made a considerable hole in a week's salary, and raced off himself to the drinking fountain. Here he found a very forlorn little party, the two fathers loudly expressing their regret that they had not gone for Mr Petman after all; the poor tired women silently wishing they were once more at home—the scrub, scrub at the wash-

tub was better than this perpetual fear lest Jack or Jem's hot temper would get him into trouble—while the children hung round their mothers' skirts and cried dolefully, or worried incessantly to know whether they were not going to see the "osses" after all.

Truth to tell, the whole party had begun to look upon Jerry's timely interposition in their behalf as a manoeuvre of Mr Petman's to get them quietly out of the way, and I am not sure but what several hard things had been said about my hero, when he suddenly turned sorrow into joy once more.

It was wonderful to see what a change came over the doleful little group when he made his appearance, tickets in hand.

The men in their outspoken way touched their hats and apologised sincerely for their late bad opinion of him, declaring him a brick; the women curtsied and wished him every blessing; while the children left off crying suddenly, put their fingers in their mouths, and stared at the "gentleman" as though he had been some good fairy dropped from heaven to save them from such a bitter disappointment as not seeing the wonders of the circus, to which they had looked forward for many a long day.

A few preparations were suggested by Jerry, such as a deep draught of the clear fountain water all the way round, much tying of neckties and flattening down of hair and arranging of hats, and once more the little party made their way, this

time under the young clown's judicious guardianship, to the enclosure, entering by the reverse door to that at which Mr Petman had stationed himself.

Having seen them safely, but withal good-temperedly, drifting along with the rest of the crowd into the coveted seats—one apiece—although in the excitement the children got as close together as possible, Jerry restored his necktie to its proper position, put his hands in his pockets, and whistling softly to himself made his way towards the dressing tents.

If there is one thing warranted to make a man feel “jolly” it is the consciousness of having done a kindly action at his own expense.

I think this feeling is more likely to be increased when the action is a secret one, for what can make one feel in better spirits than the knowledge that for once one's fellow-men have no right to their small opinion of one, that that secret action is all the more likely one day to be rewarded, because no one has signed a receipt for it in worldly praise.

But there, I have no time for moralising, which I find very often amounts to telling people what they know already.

Let us then return to Jerry.

The highest expectations entertained of the evening, so far as the audience was concerned, were realised—the house was crowded by the most brilliant assembly ever seen in it be-

fore, the royal personages having not only arrived, but as the manager had hoped, had attracted such a crowd of spectators that not a seat in the vast tent was vacant after their arrival.

CHAPTER VII.

A COWARDLY BLOW.

THE first part of the programme went capitally—the Jelli family—Madame Fourteenstone—the performing donkeys (specially engaged for the occasion)—the somersault rider—the Japanese children—the performing dogs—Epsom the jockey, and various others being greeted by thunders of applause—the whole kept going with a briskness which made up for any want of originality in the features introduced.

In the second part of the programme were placed: Lizette's usual performance on Turk—Miss Petman's introduction of Daystar—the Signor's characteristic act, "Apollo" (as Tomtit remarked once, his apology for Apollo)—Jerry's tricks, and last, but not least, the fancy-rider's performance on Bonfire, which was looked forward to with some eagerness, owing to its having been such a failure in the afternoon.

Thus it happened that soon after the interval Jerry made his way to the dressing-room, where

he spent more time and care over his toilette than he usually thought necessary—humming gaily to himself as he painted his cheeks in that peculiar fashion appropriated by those of his calling, and taking more than one critical glance at himself in the cracked looking-glass, to be sure that his new and gorgeous costume was, if not as becoming, at least as striking as he had anticipated.

In the pleasant frame of mind he was, it seemed to be worthy the time and ingenuity he had spent in planning it, and bestowing with care the few necessities for his tricks in his capacious pockets—the other and more imposing requisites were to be carried into the ring, disposed with as much show as possible on a small table—planted his jelly-bag cap on the back of his head, and made his way to the ante-room.

Here his appearance was warmly greeted, and he received on all sides hearty if rough congratulations on his recovery, which he was only too happy to acknowledge.

Presently Mr Petman entered, and it behoved the men to make a pretence of being busy. Even then he found some fault, and vented his wrath in a manner which showed he had by no means recovered from his temper of the afternoon; indeed, there was an angry flush on his face which, telling as it did of more than one “pick-me-up,” boded ill to anyone who should attempt to cross him.

Jerry meanwhile drew a little away from the

rest, and perching himself on the performing-dogs' barrel, quietly awaited his turn, while he did so still whistling softly to himself because he felt he must have vent for his feelings—which were one string of pleasant thoughts.

Who could help being jolly with the consciousness that he was once more able to be of some use in the world, if it was only to make people laugh and forget their troubles for the moment—it is not every one who has that power—the remembrance of the kindly act by which he had given pleasure to the holiday-makers, whose grateful thanks still rang in his ears; above all, the knowledge of the happiness of the some one he loved best in the world.

“God bless her!” he said to himself involuntarily. “It’s a sin to talk of shadows before her. Her life is made up of sunshine.”

And as if to corroborate this idea, as he turned his head there through the curtains over the entrance he saw the object of his thoughts, a veritable fairy in snowy skirts and shining satin, leaping over broad banners and through balloons with an ease and grace which was all her own, her face bright with excitement as she bowed from right to left in acknowledgment of the hearty applause bestowed upon her, but reserving the brightest look of all for her lover as, tall and handsome in his dark blue suit, he followed her with his eyes, for Turk was too well trained to need much use of the long whip he held in his hand.

Yes, there they were, and Jerry sat and watched them, quite content that it should be so.

A few minutes later Miss Petman entered the tent looking handsomer than ever by the gaslight, in the dark habit and hat. She glanced round, and then shut out Jerry's view of the ring by stationing herself at the opening of the curtains, apparently to take a good survey of the audience. After a little she turned away with an impatient gesture and an ill-suppressed frown on her dark face, which made it closely resemble her father's far plainer one.

But no one noticed her, for just then Lizette came dancing in with that hop, skip, and a jump peculiar to circus riders—was recalled, and made her bow, and only pausing to make some funny comment on Jerry's appearance as he looked contentedly down at her from his elevation, snatched up her cloak, and ran off to change her dress. Miss Petman, still frowning slightly, mounted Daystar, and went through her performance.

This over, on returning to the ante-room, it so happened only she and the ring-master were there besides Jerry, who was once more an involuntary witness of high words between these two. He pretended, however, to take no notice, being intent on watching the affected grace of the Signor's Apollo act, and after a little he concluded by the voices being lowered from an angry mutter into a still less audible whisper, that if anything had displeased the rather headstrong manager's daughter,

Carl Hermann had been able to smooth down her ruffled feathers.

Bending a little forward where he sat, and drawing the side of the curtain towards him so that he could more clearly see the Signor, while at the same time the nearness of the band prevented him from hearing what was going on around him, he was totally unaware that anything was amiss until suddenly, when the music paused for a moment to allow a thrill to run through the audience when Apollo performed a double somersault on the back of his two chargers, his (Jerry's) attention was attracted by the sound of Mr Petman's voice raised once more high in anger.

This, as my reader knows, was no unusual sound, and Jerry might have continued his interest in the Signor's performance, but for the fact that two voices mingled with that of the manager's—one of them Miss Petman's haughty tones, and the other that of Carl Hermann.

"— it, sir," said the manager, "does that answer my question? What the deuce business had you to call my daughter 'Rose?' Where's your respect for me, I should like to know, if you speak to her in that familiar manner? Didn't I as good as pick you up out of the street? and you—you have the impertinence to try and kiss my daughter, and call her 'Rose.' Hang you, I've a good mind to punch your head for you. What the deuce do you mean by it, eh?"

During this speech the ring-master had made

more than one attempt to put in a word, but though he repeated his question each time with more violence, the manager, who had entered the tent unheard by Jerry, and as it seemed by the two other occupants, would not allow it to be answered.

Now, however, he paused, his face ablaze with passion, and making threatening gestures with his short arms, while at the sound of the unusual commotion several of the grooms made their way into the tent, and listened curiously to what was going on. At the same time as Smith entered leading Bonfire, the curtain over the door in the tent leading to the dressing-rooms was pushed hastily aside, and a slight figure, whose gay scarlet dress and gilt helmet with its sweeping plumes were only half-hidden by a long dark cloak, advanced a few steps, then paused.

"I tell you, sir," began Carl Hermann. "If you will only let me explain—"

"Isn't that what I'm telling you to do, and what's more, if you don't explain and apologise before you leave this tent, I'll kick you out of the place, — me if I won't. Do you suppose I'm going to have every whipper-snapper, every dirty foreigner like you call my daughter 'Rose,' and say the sort of things you've been saying? Now don't deny it; I've had my eye on you for some time past. I know the game you've been playing, and I ain't ashamed to say I've spied you. Girls like compliments, I know—more fools they; but it was more 'n compliments you was a-saying, and

if she ain't got sense to give you a lesson as to what you owe to your betters, I have. Betters, yes, sir, your betters. Don't you go setting yourself up for as good as my daughter. If you have got a bit of good looks enough to turn any silly fool's head, you're as lazy, good-for-nothing a dog as ever I had to do with ; and my girl, why she'll beat you nor any one, I bet, for looks, and she knows it. Don't try and look shy, Rosy ; you know it's the truth. You've been told so scores of times by gents as ought to know, and what's more, she's got more money behind her than ever you'll have in your life if you save every penny you earn. You know that, you ——, and you think you're going to turn her head with your nonsense. But she ain't such a fool. Why didn't you up and tell him so, Rosy, and give him a smack of his face for his impertinence, like you did that London fellow as wanted to run away with you ? Now look here, you ——, you—you just apologise straight off, or I'll whip you round the ring this very moment ; do you hear ? I'll do it right before them 'ere royal ladies and gentlemen ; they'll enjoy the fun quite as well as you will, I swear."

And, with a malicious grin, the infuriated manager went a step or two nearer, and made as though he would seize the culprit by the collar.

A white evil look came into the young ring-master's face.

"If you lay a finger on me," he said, in a voice

choked with anger, "you'll regret it. Ask your daughter for an explanation, not me."

"Ask her—you —, what do you mean?" roared Mr Petman, going another step nearer. "Speak, you —, or I'll knock you down."

By this time the ante-room was full of people, the grooms, two of the clowns, the Breaknecks, and George Epsom, ready for their turns, and several others, who all began to look askance at each other, as to what turn the affair would take.

It was Miss Petman who hastened to say quickly, "Haven't I told you, papa, that there is no need for Mr Hermann to apologise. You had far better leave the matter as it is."

"Leave it as it is! — me if I will. I know what's due to me as master here, if you don't. What the devil do you mean by flying in your father's face? d—— you. If I break his neck I'll make him pay for his nonsense."

The ring-master drew back a step or two, but whether because he feared his patience would get the better of him, or from some other reason, I cannot say, and while Mr Petman still reiterated his threats in the same blustering manner, the two objects of his wrath were seen to take council together, as though deciding what course to adopt to bring the scene to an end. At length cutting short her father's furious onslaught, Miss Petman looked him calmly in the face, and said with the greatest coolness, while every one in the tent listened in open-mouthed surprise:—

"Excuse my interrupting you, papa, but since

you will have an explanation, and Carl"—with a slight laughing emphasis on the name which made more than one of the listeners drop their lower jaw still lower, and two at least hold their breath, for what should come next, even they did not guess what it could be—"and Carl does not seem inclined to give it, I suppose I must, as it might be a little awkward afterwards if either of you in any way injured the other; at least I should naturally prefer Carl's good looks, since you own they are the only thing in his favour, to remain untouched, and I don't think he would bring himself to use any violence against you. Don't interrupt me, please,"—as, spell-bound as he had been for the moment by the girl's coolness, Mr Petman showed signs of breaking out again—"I am coming to the point in a moment. You see the fact is, whether you like it or not, your opinion comes too late. Mr Hermann and I have been married a week and more!"

Never could an announcement which was likely to bring about such a fury of wrath, have been made with more *sang froid*.

As she spoke Miss Petman laid one hand on Carl Hermann's arm, and with a smile of amusement and triumph looked calmly round her.

For a few moments there was a dead silence, no one in all the curious listeners dared speak, till Mr Petman slowly found his tongue once more and burst forth into a perfect storm of passion ten times greater than before. His face was a dull purple, his eyes literally starting out of his head,

beads of perspiration rolling down his forehead, his fat figure quivering with emotion, his veins standing out in knots on his fat red hands, his whole appearance frightfully suggestive of a fit, until it seemed lucky that he was able to find some vent in words.

And such words they were! Coarse as he had been in his first outburst, it was nothing to his rage now, at the way he had been tricked. His fierce threatening gestures were terrible to witness, while his language was only fit for the lowest pothouse.

Oaths, curses, blasphemy, every expletive that coarse nature calls to its aid fell from his lips, making themselves heard almost above the clash of the music which accompanied the Signor's performance in the ring, a glimpse of him in his gay costume astride on his well-trained steed being every now and then visible through the curtains.

At length Miss Petman, who had been calmly whispering to her companion meanwhile, seemed to grow tired of his continued wrath.

"Really, papa," she said, in her careless way, while with a smile she held out her hand for the ring-master to undo the fastening of her gauntlet glove. "Really, papa, this is sheer waste of your precious time, which I am sure, with so much on your hands to do, you cannot afford to lose. You asked for an explanation and I gave it you. It is true I wished the matter to be kept quiet a little longer, but since you chose to listen, you paid for it by learning what seems to have displeased you. It is a pity you have so poor opinion of Carl, but

no doubt you will alter it in time. As it is, I fear all the talking and swearing in the world will not alter the fact that I am his wife, so I suppose he is my husband. We had the ceremony in all proper form at —— Church, and though I didn't care to have a fuss of bridesmaids and all that nonsense, it was perfectly regular, as you can ascertain for yourself if you care to do so. For the present, unless you want to upset the whole performance, hadn't you better accept the situation, and instead of making a spectacle of yourself before the people"—a name she always applied to her father's servants with something like contempt, not, of course, putting herself on a level with them—"come and drink to the future happiness of your daughter and son-in-law."

No one else save his own daughter would have dared to beard him so openly as did this bold-faced girl, who, as she finished her speech drew off her glove, and taking her purse from her pocket, took from it a broad wedding-ring, which she quietly placed on the proper finger.

The action and the words "making a spectacle of yourself" were like fuel to fire, and it was well for the listeners that a burst of applause from the audience, heralding a feat of skill by the Signor, drowned Mr Petman's further utterances.

He was literally beside himself, and became a perfect fiend in his fury.

Even the men gathered round, used as they were to pretty rough talk among themselves, began to look a little awed, the two tumblers mut-

tered audibly to each other, the Breaknecks began unconsciously trying the muscles of their arms, George Epsom slashed his whip ominously, as though he resented any one surpassing him in the knowledge of bad language, the grooms left off all pretence of harnessing or unharnessing the horses for the next performance, while the women—

There were but two in the little crowd.

The manager's daughter, if she deserved the name of a woman, for she was far more unconcerned than some of the men, stood with her hand with the wedding-ring on her finger on her husband's sleeve; he was her husband by her own showing. He was roused from his usual indolence, and, if a certain dropping off his mouth, unhidden by any moustache as it was, went for anything, not a little cowed by the turn things were taking.

And the other women there?

Why should I say woman? for I have always till now spoken of Lizette as a girl—little more than a child—and she it was who was the other spectator of this curious scene.

Why do I say—woman? My reader can guess—there would have been no need to answer could any one have seen her as she heard the death-blow given to her hopes by that cool collected speech of Rosa Petman's and her still more conclusive action—no one would have been able to think of her again as a child, for she was now a woman—ay, and more than a woman—in her pitiful helplessness.

She had come in her pretty dress in which she was going to earn applause from royal hands, dancing, because her heart was so full of joy, into the tent, a child in appearance and in mind, but scarce had she set foot within the curtains than her girlhood seemed to slip from her into the past, from which she was separated as completely as those crimson curtains hid the splendours of the ring and its gay laughing audience from view, leaving her in the darkened ante-room, where she felt a woman's bitterest sorrow weighing her down.

She stood like one transfixed—turned to stone as it were, her hands twisting all unconsciously in an iron grip the dark cloak which in her sudden movement forward had slipped from her shoulders, exposing the pretty dress which she had donned in such high glee but a few moments before, the face under the gilt helmet and plumes devoid of every vestige of colour, the sparkle of expectancy and happiness died out of the beautiful brown eyes as they remained fixed with a wild unmeaning look on what in the crowd was alone visible to her, as it had so often been before, but never so clearly as now—the face of her lover. What mockery it all seemed—the glittering dress, the bright hopes, the happy dreams for the future all swept away by those few words from the lips of Rosa—why do I hesitate to write the name? it cannot untie the bond which gives her a right to claim it—Rosa Hermann.

Yes, Carl Hermann's wife.

Poor staring brown eyes, well may they gaze so 'fixedly at that face. It is all that is visible to them from out the mists which are gathering round to shut out all else.

Look well, I say to them, for it is a sight you have not seen before, and which I pray you may never see again. Whose face is it, do you ask?

Well may you put the question. Yet it is a face you once knew well, only now the mask has fallen from it, showing you how much the honeyed smiles and words which crossed the thin lips were worth. It is the face of your false-hearted lover.

Well! Have you looked long enough? Nay, nay, I say you will do no good by staying here. This man is nothing to you now. He does not even heed your glance. His eyes are for his wife, who stands so proudly and defiantly by his side, beside whose presence you are accounted small and insignificant.

Has he not chosen well? Beauty and wealth. Has it not been told you but a few hours before how this proud girl is not pennyless like yourself? She has wealth, or at least will have; her father must have no little store, she is his only child, and there is the rich old aunt whose days they say are numbered. Has Carl Hermann counted them, I wonder? Perhaps, for he has braved what to some is no light punishment—the manager's wrath—and even now stands with presence of mind enough to calm the anger which is flushing his

handsome wife's cheeks, and bids fair to set his child against her father.

This of course her husband does not wish. So far he has laid his plans with skill, he must not fail now.

But there, come away, you have seen enough.

But Lizette does not stir. So still she stands, she scarcely seems to breathe. But by-and-by she wakes to life.

One of the grooms—Smith—her faithful follower, with an awe-struck, fearful face—fear, not of his master, but for the still form and white, white face, which is telling all unconsciously to others the tale he with all his dull brains has learnt long ago—has crept to her side, and it is his timid touch on her arm which calls her once more to life.

He motions rather than tells her she had better go. This is no place for her. The words of a father may be fit for the ears of his own child, but in Lizette's presence they are doubly sinful because of her helplessness and innocence.

So much is intelligible even to poor Smith's not too vivid imagination, and prompts his movement to her side.

As though in a dream she obeys his beseeching gesture, turns, and glides like a living ghost to the door.

But ere she can pass out a demon bars her way. Her movement had attracted the attention of Mr Petman. His raving as he plainly saw took not the slightest effect on those for whom it was intended.

In an evil moment his eye had fallen upon Lizette ; a new idea came suddenly into his mind, of which she was part, and quick to prevent her escape he planted himself before her.

Then all unheedful of the white wan face, which to any human heart must have pleaded for mercy, the torrent of his passion burst forth once more—upon whom? None other than our poor dazed, bewildered little heroine. Some evil genius had a short time before prompted him to take an interest in the private affairs of one of his company, that one Lizette.

He knew more than any one suspected of the history which but a few moments before had had *Finis* written across it, and this knowledge he now used with a cruelty which was but compatible with his brutish nature.

In a moment his vile tongue had literally emblazoned forth the little German girl's love story which we already know. The secret which she had guarded so carefully was laid bare to its very core, while the same cruel hand broke down the defence behind which she had endeavoured to hide herself and her pain, tore into so many tatters the flag of a woman's silent suffering, and held up the poor shattered hopes to scorn and ridicule.

"So you would run away, would you?" he said, as he barred the way with his portly figure, putting his ugly crimson face close to hers. "What for? You haven't got anything to be ashamed of, have you? You haven't gone and disgraced your-

self by marrying a low sneaking scoundrel who ain't no good but to sweep a crossing! You ain't such a fool. Take a lesson by my dutiful daughter and don't make such a —— mess of your love affairs as she has. Fly at high game is what I've told her times enough, and this is how she takes my advice! Now you, if you'd have been a little more sharp than you were, might have saved this fool's work. Hermann there (with an ugly leer) was a-hanging after you time enough before he took up with my daughter; he knew how to feather his nest, but why didn't you nail him? He'd have been just the sort of chap for you, and you were precious sweet on him at the time. Don't deny it"—Lizette had made no sign of denial—"we'd all got our eyes open; but why did you let him slip through your fingers? Ah, I knows all about it, you see. I always like to be sure as how my company is decent and respectable. None of your shabby customers for me. I daresay you think I ought to have looked after our friend there a bit sharper. Will you give him a character when I've chucked him out? Don't be too hard on him. Plenty of fellows have played fast-and-loose before now. I suppose, too, I ought to feel flattered that he preferred my daughter to you, but I ain't. Rose has been a fool, as she'll find out before long. Why, she might have had a regular London swell, with goodness knows how many hundreds a year and all for a snap of her fingers, and then perhaps this scoundrel might have married you after all. But then you might

have cut the show, and I can't afford to spare you just yet—I ain't likely soon to get some one as handy at the business as you are. You goes down with the chaps twice as well as that old hag, Madame Petite. She'll have to give up very soon; the boys call her a bag of bones, with all her dress and make up. What some gentlemen of our acquaintance can see in her I can't think. I haven't inquired into their private history. I thought best not. Perhaps it ain't as goody-goody as yours. It isn't a case of love, I'm thinking. You'll go on the same rule one of these days. But I'll tell you one thing—if my girl has been fool enough to throw herself away on this chap, don't you go on with none of your old tricks. I've seen you trying to wheedle round him with your spry costumes and looks and ways. He's thrown you over, but I'll look out he behaves himself properly now he's Rose's husband. You find some other fellow. You're not as handsome as my girl, but you've got looks, and are handy enough at your work to take any one's fancy. You've been a fool, of course. You've regular worshipped him,—been head over heels in love with him. Any one can see that by the way you flung yourself at his head, and what's more, if it was only an engagement, which you bet your life I'd soon put a stop to, instead of the affair being all signed, sealed, and settled—he took care of that—you'd have him back. Ay, that you would, this very moment. As it is you can't, but you'll go and cry your eyes out of your head and spoil your good

looks and set the whole show laughing at you, and saying—”

What the show would say of this affair, Mr Petman was not given time to express.

His worse than cruel harangue was at this point suddenly stayed.

All at once some one who till now had stood like one struck dumb woke to life and sense.

All the men on hearing the opening words of their master's long speech had glanced meaningly at each other, and, as if by common assent, drawn on one side and made a show of doing something or other.

It was but a pretence, for while for the sake of one who was a favourite amongst them, they wished it to be believed that they were deaf to the words which were ringing round them, they could not now and then forbear glancing fearfully in the direction of that little figure before which the manager had planted himself.

Lizette had, it seemed, been so startled by the attack so suddenly made upon her, that letting her cloak fall from her shoulders to her feet, she had merely turned and faced him and stood with her eyes—seeming suddenly to have grown twice their natural size—fixed on his face, all unmeaningly at first, so dazed was she. Then, as the cold sneers and coarse rude taunts met her understanding, she suddenly glanced round with a look of wild uncertainty. Wherever she turned the curious glances of those around her were all the

answer she received to a pleading they could not interpret.

A moment, and then as though unable to resist the torrent of jeers and sneers which was showered upon her, she slowly drooped her head into her hands, and stood bowed and defenceless before her tormentor.

The moments had flown by, still Mr Petman showed no signs of having exhausted the vials of his wrath. The men gave up any make-belief of unconcern, gathered in knots and listened in awe. Rosa Hermann spoke in hurried whispers now and then to her husband, who seeming too fearful to reply in words, answered by an impatient gesture, as he stood playing somewhat nervously with his whip, and stealing now and then furtive glances at the figure which drooped lower and lower at every coarse word which fell upon her ears, so lately deafened by a blow none the less cruel, while gradually from between the rigid clasp of the enclosed fingers, a dull crimson flush, which seemed to burn the hitherto pale face, made itself visible.

It was a curious scene, a silence broken only by Mr Petman's coarse tones—to which the band outside played a little less harsh accompaniment—until suddenly, stung no doubt to the very quick by the heartless blow inflicted upon her, Lizette raised her head, showing a face on which was imprinted by a fiery hand a look of wild, agonised beseeching there could be no mistaking, at least not by him to whom it was turned, as the

only one in all the little crowd who could aid her in her sore extremity.

Nor did it plead in vain to the honest brave heart, which beat so wildly that its owner could scarcely breathe, much less move, until this signal came.

Yes, one glance at that face and Jerry was stone no longer, but a loving, avenging soul, who had suddenly awoke to the sense of what was going on around him.

With a shout of defiance which made itself heard above the music of the band, and caused more than one of the audience to glance curiously in the direction of the ante-room, all ignorant of the little drama of human brutality—which was only separated from their gaze by the crimson curtains—he sprang forward with an agility of which but a short time before he had not seemed capable, dashed aside the arm which held Lizette a prisoner, and with his face literally ablaze with passion, his eyes flashing like two danger signals, wrested the long whip from the manager's grasp. In another moment the cord thong was whirling over his head in a way which certainly meant mischief to that gentleman's shiny bald pate.

But ere his hand could deliver the well-merited punishment, some of the grooms sprang forward, calling him loudly to desist.

But Jerry was beside himself with passion, and refused to give way.

"Let go, you fool," shouted Will Breakneck,

amazed to find his match in the clown, who was apparently so much his inferior in strength.

But Jerry still struggled, and it is uncertain how the affair might have ended, had it not been that suddenly above the din and confusion came a cry of entreaty, in a voice which was shrill with agony.

“Jerry!”

At the same moment a small white hand was laid on his many-coloured sleeve.

The voice, the touch, had more power than the combined strength of those around him.

The whip fell from his hand to the floor, the passion died out of his face as quickly as it had risen, and with his arms hanging helpless at his side he turned to Lizette, as she stood beside him, not daring—not only because of his own fault, if such it was—to meet her glance, but letting his head sink low on his breast.

“Come away,” he said, in a low, scarcely audible voice, strangely unlike his usual sharp, ringing utterance. “Let us go away, or I shall kill him.”

There was no mistaking the intensity of the tone.

Lizette did not say a word, only turned—the men, Mr Petman among them, fell back before her in utter silence—and followed by Jerry, like a dog following his mistress, she crossed the tent with a slow, gliding step, very unlike her usual light tripping walk, her slight figure no longer drooping, but become tall and erect, that of a veritable queen of womanly dignity.

Once only she paused.

It was when Jerry, with a trembling hand, fumbled with the curtain over the doorway.

Then she turned and gave one last look at the shrinking coward who had been quick to stand up in his own defence, but had stood quietly by and heard the woman he had once vowed he loved, the woman who of his own will he had tricked and befooled, held up to scorn and ridicule, which his baseness had brought upon her—stood by and never moved so much as a finger, uttered so much as a word, to shield her.

Oh, Carl Hermann! dearly will you have to account for the part you have played to this innocent friendless girl who trusted you so implicitly, but double coward and scoundrel are you for your craven fear to-day.

Well may you draw a step nearer to your wife; she has spirit enough, as you will soon learn. Well may you cringe and move uneasily where you stand, before the glance of those dog-like brown eyes, which are tearless and dry—for the death of faith is too deep a grief for tears—all the flash and sparkle died out of them, in its place an indescribable sadness, which dims their brightness with dark misty shadows.

One moment they take that last look at you and your haughty wife—side by side—then the curtain falls over the two figures—Lizette and the only friend there seems to be left to her in the world—Jerry, the clown.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT CAN I DO?

BUT though hearts may be nigh to breaking, and it seems that so dark is the cloud above our own heads that it must perforce throw a shadow over the rest of the universe, we find our having a burden to bear has no effect upon those around us.

The world goes on its way just the same as if nothing has happened, which, indeed, on consideration, is just as well, for every moment of the day we should find ourselves at a full stop if we were brought to a standstill by the troubles of our neighbours.

No, we have got to live, no matter what happens short of death, and that means going on exactly as before—eating and drinking, and struggling to get our daily bread just in the same old way, as though we never entertained any thought beyond getting through life in the quickest and easiest way possible, which is not to say always the most pleasant. So Lizette found it—indeed the knowledge was even forced upon her, more

quickly than upon most people, whether for her good or no it was hard to say.

There is no need for me to comment on the scene already described, my reader will have understood it far better perhaps than some of the actors in it.

Our old friend Jerry, as will have been guessed was perfectly stunned, so doubly confident had he become, because he was perfectly satisfied there had been no cause whatever for his misgivings of the night before, so satisfied that there was really no cloud in the sky to dim the brightness of Lizette's happiness that the bursting of the storm took him all the more by surprise; indeed it was some time before the true state of the case forced itself into his mind.

Even when listening to Mr Petman's outburst he had done so mechanically; it was not till Lizette's unspoken pleading implored his aid that he was able to rouse himself to any action at all.

What this was we have already seen, and lucky it was, both for him and the worthy manager, that when bodily strength was no match for him in his passion, that touch upon his arm had yet power to calm him.

Controlled, if not calmed by it, he had followed her who gave it, and quitted the scene of what had been doubly a blow to each of them.

The wish which each had felt was to get away as quickly as possible from sound of human voice and curious glance of many eyes, so they passed out of the tent together.

But a few moments had passed since they had entered, and what a magic touch those seconds had had! I do not mean strictly in appearance—as is often the case when a hero and heroine go through some great ordeal—when hair turns white—or is suddenly streaked with grey—or a fresh young figure becomes all at once old and drooping—all its life gone—nothing but a weary, spiritless body left.

No, to say the exact truth, no transformation whatever had taken place in either Jerry's hair or Lizette's light little figure—the one stuck up as bright and wiry as ever under his jelly-bag hat, while the pretty dress of the fire-spirit was still set off to advantage by the lithe figure of the little fancy-rider. And yet there was an unmistakable something about them both which told its own tale.

When they had severally entered the tent it had been with lightest hearts, such as made their gay costumes seem but to fit in with their happy moods.

Now what mockery they seemed. It is true that Jerry's full trousers, garibaldi, and sleeves still stuck out in all directions in the funniest manner; not even Mr Petman's wildest raging or the sudden blow inflicted on the wearer's hopes could take away from them the admirable stiffening properties of Mrs Wheaten's starch, neither had they had the slightest effect upon the tasteful work of Madame Petite's fingers.

No,—but it is our faces which are the index to

our mind, and there was no mistaking that look of wild unutterable passion which made itself seen even under the rouge and powder—which had been disposed on it with so much care but a short time before, to call forth merriment, not to mock at grief—or the white, drawn, utterly helpless, hopeless look of the girl's. If ever a face bore written across it "the end of all worth living for," it was Lizette's as the curtain fell noiselessly behind them, shutting them from the ante-room.

But even in the passage without they were not alone. There were sounds of voices coming quickly from the direction of the dressing-room, which lay beyond; and, as though unwilling to encounter any more questioning eyes, Lizette turned quickly away and entered a doorway on the left, which was in fact the entry to a big wooden building known as the stables. Here, at least, they were alone, save for the presence of dumb beasts, whose big dark forms in the long rows of stalls on either side were just rendered visible by the faint moonlight coming straggling in through the door which stood open at the other end.

Yes, here they were alone—out of reach of all that sickening scene.

For a few moments they stood side by side in the semi-darkness without speaking. Then suddenly Lizette seemed to become aware of her hold upon her companion's arm, which had gradually tightened as she had turned to take that last look at the picture in the ante-room—tightened

till the little white fingers had sorely crumpled the many-coloured sleeve, and left a deep red mark on the arm beneath. She did not herself know how firm her clasp had been of this her only support, nor, I think, did Jerry. It was only when the hold was suddenly loosened that he seemed to become aware of it.

Even then he did not move, only looked right away between the rows of horses' heads, as though determined not again to meet the glance of those beseeching brown eyes, and said, in a voice so stern and unlike his own, it was almost gruff,—

"You heard what he said?" with a motion of his head in the direction of the ante-room. Was there any need to ask the question? Had not the appeal for his aid already given him his answer. "You heard what he said?"

"Yes," came the answer, in a low but perfectly distinct tone; "I heard."

"And you understood?" asked Jerry again—another unnecessary question.

"Yes," again came the answer, in the same clear tone.

"You—you loved him very much?" Why did Jerry put such a useless catechism?

"Yes," again replied Lizette; "I did love him."

"And now, what can I do for you?"

"Nothing." No thanks, only the one word.

"And you—what will you do?"

Again, "Nothing."

"Then God help you," said Jerry, in the same

stern tone, as though he were commanding rather than asking a blessing. "God help you." It was such a prayer as men pray but a few times in their lives, and in his heart he added, "and me too ;" and after a little, "and forgive him."

I am sorry to say this prayer for pardon was not prompted by a forgiving feeling in his own breast, but rather by a sense of "Let Heaven grant him pardon—I cannot."

Some men's just anger, fortunately for those against whom it is directed, lies too deep for action ; but I lay no claim to such nobility of nature for my hero, and ill would it have been for him had the cause of all the evil which had come to pass stood before him.

Jerry was but mortal after all, and what is more, of low if honest birth ; accustomed to a rough, knock-about life, which made it second nature for him to resent an injury in the way he knew best—namely, by settling the account by a few well-aimed blows straight out from the shoulder ; in other words, a good stand-up fight, which, if hardly as gentlemanly as contempt or a battle of words with sarcasm for weapons, or a secret resolve to bring disgrace and ruin on the delinquent's head, was yet as safe a vent for one's feelings, and at the same time a far more manly one.

Thus, had Carl Hermann been within reach of that strong muscular arm, he would have been forced to give an answer for his dealings with an innocent girl's faith, which, in the utterance,

might have caused no little damage to his slim, gentlemanly appearance, and sent him to his handsome wife a far less lovable-looking object than when he wooed and won her under cover of his courtship with his unsuspecting little country-woman.

As it was, however, Lizette had bidden him keep his anger within bounds, and, of course, he had nothing to do but to obey ; but, as he owed to himself, he would far rather have "tackled" both Carl Hermann and Mr Petman at once than have stood by and done nothing. Action with Jerry was far more necessary than thought ; and to be obliged to stand by inactive, and neither by word nor deed express the indignation which he felt at what had passed, galled him more than I can express.

His catechism of Lizette over, there was silence again, until suddenly the band in the circus, which, the Signor's performance over, had suddenly ceased, burst forth again into the gay march which it was well known heralded Daystar's appearance, and followed immediately by a loud burst of applause, which, as usual, told that the lady-rider had entered the ring.

No doubt she was bowing and smiling and looking as handsome as ever as she acknowledged the warm greeting, and her husband would be in attendance looking so proud and happy as he heard the flattering remarks upon his chosen wife's appearance.

Ah, it was all very well for her to smile and

respond to the greeting. She had no cause to look pale and ill, and feel as though the life had all gone out of her. But almost insensibly Jerry felt some very hard words rise to his lips. He had to bite his lips to keep himself from sullyng Lizette's ears with such coarse expressions as were natural to his nature.

But again, inaction made his feelings all the worse for him to bear, and if ever a wish could have in some way crippled the talented Daystar and so hindered his mistress's triumph, it was on that day of the last performance at the Gardens.

Fortunately, however, for Jerry's usual forbearance and love of all animals, even the not too sweet-tempered Daystar—wishes being said not to have anything to do with horses—it seemed, judging by the applause invoked, was going through his tricks with his accustomed ease, and earning for his mistress well-merited approval.

Those two standing so silently alone in the big bare stable listened each with bitter thoughts, till presently one of the horses in a stall near, after peering eagerly over the gate, shook his head and neighed noisily.

The pair started, and, as though recalled to herself by what was to her a familiar sound, Lizette turned in the direction of the neighing steed. And sure enough it was Bonfire's dark glossy head, who, recognising his old friend once again, was engaged thus noisily in attracting her attention.

Quietly and without a word the little fancy-

rider stepped slowly across the rough floor, with its carpeting of clean straw, until she was within reach of the horse's stall.

The beautiful beast stretched out his head eagerly as she advanced, arching his neck and shaking his mane, no doubt his way of expressing his joy at seeing her again.

Lizette stroked his glossy coat gently, performing the action a little absently and without any colour coming back to her white face. But presently Bonfire, after neighing interrogatively more than once, put his cold nose into his new mistress's hand.

It might have been that he was only seeking for the apple or piece of sugar which she had been wont to bestow upon him in the old days when his former master had incurred his wife's jealousy by teaching the little fancy-rider to ride the beautiful brute; but to Lizette it was like a mute expression of sympathy, and touched her more than all the blundering proffers of sympathy which Jerry would have offered could he have found words to frame them.

With a low quivering sigh, which seemed to have been wrung from her very heart, she clasped her arms round "Bonfire's" neck, and hid her face in his dusky mane.

At the sound of the sigh, Jerry glanced round quickly, fearing to find that the bitterness of her heart had been too much for her, half dreading to see her lying stretched insensible on the floor; but when he saw her seeking from the horse the

consolation in her sorrow that he had not been able, try as he would, to offer, he felt instinctively that it was no place for any prying eyes—he was not wanted. Perhaps it would have made his thoughts less bitter if only Lizette had turned to him in her trouble, had she but given him one sign that his sympathy would be acceptable. Who sooner than he would have proffered it?

But she had scarcely so much as spoken to him, disdained to retain even his support, and now turned to seek from a poor dumb animal what he would have given her tenfold as readily, while he must stand by and do nothing.

Oh, how inconsistent people are who are in love! Why is it they always claim so little yet expect so much? Had not Jerry owned to himself a dozen times at least that Lizette had no suspicion of the true state of his feelings towards her? Had he not more than once induced himself to rejoice and be glad in the same? Had he not admitted but a short time before that the period of his imprisonment, and some other cause which then he did not know, but now guessed, had widened the distance between him and his little friend? Above all, was she not the real sufferer by the blow which had fallen, so much so that it was a wonder she could retain so much consciousness as she did?

Ah! it is very often the way that in being hard upon ourselves we often unknowingly do harm to those we love.

Here was Lizette perhaps longing for a kindly

word, an expression of good-will to tell her she had at least one friend in the world which seemed suddenly to have grown so dreary and empty, and Jerry envying even Bonfire his dumb way of showing his feelings of affection, yet not daring to be as bold as he was.

All he felt was that if he could do nothing but stare vacantly around him, he had better relieve Lizette from the burden of his presence, which might be distasteful to her.

With a sudden gesture, which might have been expressive of either impatience or anger, he turned away, and with a rustling of the straw as he trod it with unnecessary heaviness beneath his slippered feet, he crossed the stable to where the door stood open, and leaning against one of the supports, looked far out into the darkness with bright burning eyes, and a face which, in spite of the cool wind which blew in from without, was hot and throbbing with a glow of unnatural excitement.

How long he stood thus he scarcely knew, it seemed to him a long, long while, though it must have been but a few minutes.

It was a strange picture the glimmering light of the moon showed—the bare stable, with its rows of dark motionless forms, save when the tossing of some proud head told these shadowy figures were not carved out of stone as they at first appeared; the girl in her strange dress, with her dark head resting on Bonfire's darker mane, her white arms clasped round his arched neck, he

standing like a statue, as though he knew why it was his mistress remained so long in the same position, only now and then rubbing his nose slowly up and down her shoulder as though bidding her be comforted, and in the doorway the young clown in his parti-coloured dress, his hands as usual plunged deeply into his voluminous pockets, his hat far at the back of his head, his face with its covering of paint and powder.

Truly this was a glimpse behind the scenes. We are so apt to think that those gaily-dressed beings who disport themselves so airily in the ring amidst all the excitement of music, many lights, and loud applause, lead a sort of butterfly existence. Any one who can dance so well, or make us laugh till our sides ache, cannot have very much to do with care ; and when perhaps some *artiste* fails to please us as much as usual we call her dull and stupid, and scarcely deign to give her the encouragement of our applause, forgetting how often a full heart may beat under the tinsel bodice, how weary limbs and aching brain make feet trip less lightly and jokes be uttered mirthlessly by a tongue which longs to give relief to an overbearing mind by other words than those of silly jokes and wheezes which have been uttered scores and scores of times before.

As Jerry stood at the door, in a double sense did the glitter seem to have fallen from him. His thoughts were very bitter, and the evil passion very strong within him. And truly his lot seemed a hard one.

Had it not been enough that the love of his life should have been withheld from him, but must he suffer the double pain of seeing what had been denied him trodden ruthlessly under foot by one who had proved himself so unworthy of it?

Small wonder Jerry's thoughts were bitter ones.

He did not at first, like perhaps other lovers would have done, see in this trampling under foot a hope that he might perhaps be permitted to gather up the precious fragments and unite them into what they were before, guarding them so carefully that in time no one should be able to say it was the same precious treasure which had been so ruthlessly bruised and shattered.

No, the blow had been too swift and sure to leave room in his heart for any faint glimmer of hope. At least so it seemed at first, but by-and-by as he grew more calm, and he began to review what had passed in a clearer light, and call to mind Lizette's answer to his question, "What will you do?" "Nothing,"—he began to see before him what the future must be for her; and almost insensibly came the idea, "If she would but let me take his place I would smooth the way for her in the world. It will seem so big and lonely now, even worse than before."

And though at first he tried to put the thought from him it still came back again, until almost unconsciously he turned and looked in the direction of the object of his thoughts, with a heart beating like wildfire beneath his many-coloured

body, he peering through the darkness as though he expected to see Lizette turned towards him, her arms outstretched for him to go to her—an answer to his unspoken question in her face.

But no, his wild wish was not, could not be granted. Lizette had not moved, only become like every one of the other shadows, motionless and still.

What should he do? A hundred times Jerry asked himself that question, but without ever finding a satisfactory answer.

If she would only move or speak, give some sign, look up, or even sob and let him know that tears were relieving her pent-up sorrow, he would have dared go to her and say what was in his heart.

As it was, he only stood looking with hungry, eager eyes at her across the darkness, letting the precious moments go by, and fearing to risk all for what was most dear to him in life, lest he should lose all.

Ought he not to have been taught a lesson by the loss which delay had caused him when he had debated the same question some weeks before?

Surely he will not hold back now. Yet see, he still falters, his hands play nervously with his cap, which he has taken off to wipe away the beads of perspiration which have started on his forehead, till presently he replaces it on his head, and cautiously, as though afraid any one should see the action, he raises his arm and kisses tenderly the

crumpled part of his sleeve on which Lizette's hand has rested.

It is a silly thing to do perhaps, for what is he really kissing but a few inches of starched rag? but it exactly illustrates the funny quirks and cranks in my hero's character.

Here was he wasting his time in adoring, as it were, the spot where her fingers had rested, and all the while afraid to venture to offer a consolation which could not fail to be sweet, if it only gave evidence of one true spirit which was ready to bear a breaking heart's burden.

Come, Jerry, come! what is there to fear? Though she may put the thought from her now, will she not perhaps remember it with increasing kindness when time has healed the wound it was meant to bind up?

But still Jerry pauses, looking eagerly, expectantly, expecting he knows not what, across the darkness at the motionless figure beside Bonfire, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other, smoothing down his dress with nervous hands, and twisting his head restlessly from side to side.

Hark! Another burst of applause. The people are liberal in their approbation to-night, and Day-star no doubt is being made to exert himself to the utmost under his mistress's firm hand.

This surely will rouse Jerry to a sense of how time is passing. But no, it rather seems to increase his indecision. Then suddenly, as the noise of much clapping of hands dies away, the

silence which follows is broken by a sound from the other side of the stable, a long fluttering sigh.

It is from Lizette, and she moves uneasily, and without raising her head rubs her hand caressingly over Bonfire's glossy neck, and he again answers by rubbing his head up and down her shoulder.

The sound and sight recalls Jerry. He waits no longer, but darts rather than walks across the short space which divides him from her he loves.

"Lizette," he says in a hurried whisper, laying a trembling hand on her arm—"Lizette!"

He paused, for he wants to see her face before he dare venture further. At his touch she raises it and looks up wonderingly and half dazed at him, while Bonfire discreetly draws back a few paces.

"Lizette," says Jerry again, and a sudden wild hope leaps into his heart, but ere he can give utterance to the words which are rushing to his lips, there is a sound of voices near at hand, Miss Hartzmann's name being repeated in loud tones. There was evidently no little excitement going on in the passage outside, of which the little fancy-rider was the cause.

"I tell you," said an angry voice, unmistakably that of the manager, though his tones were less high and rather more sulky than when we last heard them, "I tell you I won't cut it out. Do you think I'm going to disappoint them after

Rosa making such an ass of herself this morning? What do I care if that Hartzmann girl did choose to take offence at what I said? Wasn't it the truth? Ride! of course she'll ride; if she don't I'll have her up for it, and if I don't lay the damages at a pretty penny, and get 'em, my name ain't Charles Petman."

This speech had once again interrupted Jerry, for at the sound of the voices Lizette had shrank back into the shadow.

The voices came nearer. The speakers were evidently making for the stable, and in a few seconds would have discovered the hiding-place of the missing artists.

Jerry hastily put all thought on one side of saying what he had to say, to give his attention to the matter on hand.

One thing he decided in his own mind. Not for all the managers in the world should Lizette ride again that night—for Mr Petman less than any.

He said so in a hurried whisper to his companion, and she made no reply.

At that moment Smith the groom entered the stable, peering in a blind way from right to left.

"Are you here, Miss Lizette?" he asked, in his slow way.

Jerry went forward.

"Yes," he said quietly, "Miss Hartzmann is here, Smith; what do you want, eh?"

"Please, Mr Jerry, Miss Petman—leastways, Daystar 'll soon be done now; they've just taken

in the hurdles, and the master's a-asking where Bonfire is."

"There's Bonfire," said Jerry, with a gesture towards that animal's stall.

Smith, although he knew well enough that the horse was there, and in excellent condition, peered at it concernedly for some minutes.

"But Miss Lizette—the master's asking for her too," he mumbled after a minute, evidently very confused by Jerry's manner.

"Tell him to ride the horse himself," said the young clown, with quiet emphasis. "Miss Hartzmann will not appear again to-night. After what has occurred, it is impossible."

"But, sir," began Smith, positively aghast at this open rebellion, "she's engaged to ride—"

"But she wasn't engaged to be insulted as she has been," replied Jerry wrathfully. "You go and tell him what I've said."

The groom hesitated. He well knew the torrent of abuse which would be showered on his head if he ventured to take such a message of defiance to the mighty manager. Fortunately, however, for the wavering between his allegiance to Lizette and his fear of his master, at that minute several of his companions entered the stables with the Signor's two horses. In the darkness they at first did not notice the slight figure standing so still beside Bonfire, and began talking in an excited kind of way about what had passed, which was naturally the theme of every tongue.

For the most part their remarks were in favour of Lizette, as they naturally would be—being men, they were glad of an excuse of blackballing one of their fellows—but at the same time it was decided that the Hartzmann girl had been a fool not to throw him over directly he had begun to show any attention to the manager's daughter. The reasons for his preferring the latter were roughly but forcibly set forth in a way which made one of the listeners shrink back farther into the shadow.

Jerry as soon as he could stopped the busy tongues, and Smith, with much consternation, communicated the news that the fancy-rider had refused to appear.

This announcement was in more than one case warmly seconded, but at the same time the inadvisability of the course was subjected to much comment.

"There 'll be the devil to pay," said Birkett, who was busily engaged in getting into their stalls the Apolio thoroughbreds, who were not a little glad that their turn was over, and they were able to return to the solitude and darkness of their stable. "If Hartzmann's made up her mind to let her turn go, she'll have to pay for it. They won't weigh the master's words against the agreement, if it comes to law. I know enough about these affairs. It's all very well to say 'I won't ride,' especially when there's yer mark against yer, but there's no saying 'I won't pay' when they blue you of two years' screw like that — old Burbox did me."

The recital of this little incident caused a revulsion of views in favour of Lizette putting her pride in her pocket and doing her duty.

"I tell you she ain't going to ride," said Jerry, with an air of great determination.

More than one of his listeners was tempted to ask what the devil it was to do with him, but the question was put aside by a consciousness of the necessity to settle the then more important matter.

"Well, that's all I know," began old Turner, who had a curious habit of beginning a conversation in the middle of a sentence, as though he had already been arguing the point with himself for some time, which fact often led his opinion to be of far more value than that of most of his fellows. "Well, that's all I know; there's nothing more to be said."

On being pressed to be more explicit, he said at some length that Hermann had behaved like a scoundrel, so much so that if Lizette had been his daughter—here the old man sighed heavily, his own and only child had been in the tight-wire business until an accident had consigned her to a couch, which with such injury to her spine she had not left till she was carried out—"if she was my daughter, I'd treat him to such a thrashing as Jerry there seemed inclined to give the gov'nor. If only the clown had 'gone for' the real offender, they"—meaning the grooms—"would not have been in such a hurry to hinder him; the manager's position made his conduct another affair.

I'd have thrashed that young master within an inch of his life, and spoilt his airs and graces for some considerable time, and I'd giye Miss Rosa a taste of my mind. They wouldn't make such a handsome couple when I'd done with them. This comes of being mixed up with gentlemen. If Hermann hadn't set himself up to be better than the rest, he'd never have done the skulking he has. I hate yer fine gentlemen with their sneaking ways and soft tongues. Why can't they stick to their own, and not come playing their dirty tricks with them as ain't their equals, as they say. What business had they to come and turn girls' heads, and make 'em think all sorts of things as do 'em no good, when the chap hooks it, and leaves 'em to be the laughing-stock of the whole company so as no respectable fellow 'll take up with 'em for fear of being chaffed."

"Cut it short, Turner," interrupted one of the younger grooms, who, being a new hand, did not share the universal veneration for the old man's views. "There's Daystar going his final gallop. We'll have the gov'nor in a moment, and then there 'll be no end of a row."

The long and the short of Turner's harangue was, that if Lizette were his daughter he'd have shown up, if only for the sake of showing that she had some sort of spirit in her.

"She ain't a-going to let them get the laugh of her, if she's the sort of girl I take her for. The old man's daughter's got the best of it, no one can deny that; but if I were in Hartzmann's place I'd

up and let them see I didn't care for all his sneaking tricks. There's as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, and she being as honest and hard-working a lass as ever lived—ay, and something more, as makes you feel as it's a pleasure to be in the same show with her—I'll bring good luck to Lizette Hartzmann. Why, before that fine German fellow has begun to find out what sort of a temper his wife's got—and I knows enough to be sure he's got more than his match—there 'll be some one else willing to go down on his bended knees and beg her to marry him. And no more than she deserves, if she behaves like a sensible, plucky girl now, and holds her head high instead of moping."

The silence which followed his speech, uttered with all the assurance of one who knew the worth of every word which fell from his lips, was unbroken for several moments.

Then there was a sudden movement in Bonfire's stall, and to the surprise of some of the speakers, Lizette stood before them—no longer the drooping bowed figure they had last seen her, but with erect head and dignified carriage, a touch of stateliness about her which was quite new to her.

"Thank you, Turner," she said, in her quiet simple way, but yet not without a touch of earnestness in her tone ; "thank you for speaking as you have. I know you all mean it well. I have been—silly, but I'll try and do as you say, and not give to any of you cause for it to

laugh at me. If you will only please not to say anything to me of what you know. I don't suppose I shall be able, but I'm going to try and forget all about it. And, Jerry," turning to the young clown, "please, I'd rather ride to-night."

Jerry, in a low whisper, began to expostulate, but she put all his arguments quietly on one side.

"I don't like to do what you do not wish," she said; "but really I must ride. It will not hurt me. I am quite myself now. It was only Mr Petman frightened me. I should be sorry to disappoint the people again; and, besides, Bonfire is so anxious to atone for his naughtiness this morning. Yes, I must ride. Will you please get Bonfire ready?"

As Jerry could say nothing in answer to this protestation, and as the prolonged burst of applause which made itself heard told of Daystar's exit, the fancy-rider's request was readily acceded to; indeed, there was a fight for the honour of so doing, such a glamour of glory had Lizette's conduct cast over her. Rough and uncultivated as the men were, they could yet sympathise with and honour in their own way, one who had been so hardly treated.

"Here, you, Joe," said Birkett, leading Bonfire out of his stall, "you run and get the saddle; we'll put it on her in here. You'd best ride him on, miss. Now then, Smith, do leave a bit of skin on the beast," for the groom was venting his feelings in rubbing the fire-horse down in a way

which promised to give a fine gloss to his coat, but was somewhat trying to one who has already gone through the operation preparatory to the performance.

In a few minutes all was ready; and, putting one foot into Smith's hand, Lizette sprang into the saddle, without having said another word save a few quiet thanks to her willing servants.

But while she gathered the reins in her hand she seemed to hesitate.

"Are you ready?" said Turner. "Look sharp! Miss Rosa's just taken one call, and it won't do any good to keep 'em waiting."

"I am coming," said Lizette, while Smith smoothed out the folds of her dress and arranged the drooping feathers of her helmet with a reverent hand, but still she seemed loath to go from the sheltering darkness into the light.

Till now Jerry had stood motionless by, refusing to give anything more than his assent to the proceeding; but now he, as usual, stuck his hat on the back of his head, and giving himself a "pull together," as he phrased it, took Bonfire's bridle in his hand.

"Your turn comes after, Jerry; you ain't going too."

"Let it; I'm going on now or not at all," said the clown, with unnecessary fierceness.

"But the guv'nor—"

"Let him go and be hanged! I tell you I'm going on now, and I'll give him his answer if he tries to prevent it." And away the clown went

leading Bonfire, while Smith held aside the curtain.

In the ante-room considerable excitement was rife as to what would be the issue of what seemed likely to be a serious rupture between the manager and his company, while several times already the bandmaster had sent to know if he was to go on with the Bonfire music, or what was the matter that he had not received the usual signal.

"All right, she's coming," said Will Breakneck, who was very much interested in the affair. "By Jove!" in a loud aside, "she's a plucky one. I'm——if I would have shown up, if I had been her."

Once more the men fell back to make way for Lizette to pass, Bonfire stepping proudly and with arched neck, as though he was aware of the precious burden he bore. For a moment Lizette placed her hand over her eyes to shade them from the glare of the light after the darkness; but perhaps afraid it might appear that she was doing so to hide her face, she drew it down; and looking neither to the right nor to the left—keeping her gaze fixed on the white star between Bonfire's ears—let Jerry lead her where he would.

Straight through the ante-room they passed to the entrance, at the side of which stood Mr Petman, still talking excitedly to his daughter.

He turned at Bonfire's approach; and Rosa Hermann, whether to make way for the horse, or because she did not quite like to meet Lizette's glance should it be turned upon her, shrank back a little into the corner.

Jerry paused a moment before the manager to say, in that quiet unquestionable manner of his,—

“It’s no use my attempting those tricks to-night, Mr Petman; I’m going on as usual with Miss Hartzmann.”

I doubt if the manager would have been able, in his astonishment at this cool treatment, to find words to disagree with the arrangement, but Jerry did not wait for an answer.

He motioned to two of the men to open the curtains, and still leading Bonfire, entered the ring, not, in fact, letting go that animal’s rein until the signal from the band made it absolutely necessary for him to do so.

There is, I think, no need for me to describe the performance, having already done so when it was attempted by the manager’s daughter in the morning, although in the opinion of the spectators that lady, even allowing for ill-temper on her steed’s part, had been far behind her successor in grace and cleverness, and they applauded the pretty rider vociferously, giving her the best “call” of the evening. The royal personages, who had begun to show some slight signs of *ennui* at the repetition of the same old “acts” they had seen hundreds of times before, even signified their approval by joining in the general demand for a repetition of one or two of the best tricks, smiling graciously when, in return for the honour, Lizette caused the good Bonfire to bow three times before their seats.

Of course it was all very jolly to be the favoured rider.

I wonder how many in that vast throng envied her her life. It seems so awfully nice to have nothing to do but wear pretty dresses and make a horse perform tricks that he has done hundreds of times before, with the lights blazing, the gay music playing, and admiring crowds applauding.

All very easy and jolly, of course—

But I wonder did any in that vast throng stop to compare between the little fancy-rider who had so lately appeared before them, all smiles and gaiety as she flew like a bird through the balloons, always selecting for some more special exhibition of skill or grace that held by the tall young ring-master, at whom she would every now and then turn and smile in a way which set certain impassioned adorers in the sixpenny seats—public performers make heaps and heaps of conquests of which they know nothing, which perhaps is just as well, as the knowledge of the score of hearts which they nightly enslave might interfere seriously with their business—Lizette's smiles at Carl Hermann, I say—making her impromptu admirers in the cheap seats positively her sworn slaves for the rest of their lives. Did any one mark the contrast between this certainly very happy-looking little *artiste* and the Fay of Fire. True, Lizette, as I have said, seemed to have lost none of her old grace with the acquisition of skill in managing Bonfire, and sharing his tricks, but

there was no longer the half-laughing, half-serious interest in her work. She had no shy smiles and stray words for any one now, and even when she bowed in acknowledgment of the applause bestowed on her, there was no answering sparkle in the pretty brown eyes. Her face was unnaturally pale, save for one bright spot in the centre of each cheek. When she rested between her tricks, instead of looking round at the audience, as she usually did, with a childish delight which was not vanity, to see the many faces bright with pleasure which she had helped to produce, or watching with interest, as she used to do, the antics of the clown who employed the intervals with his antics, she amused herself by plaiting Bonfire's mane, or playing absently with the lace on her dress.

It would, I may here say, have been needless for her to have paid any attention to Jerry when it came to his turn to disport himself. He had said it would be perfectly useless for him to attempt to appear in his new character of conjurer. Every trick had gone as completely out of his head as though he had never spent so much time in mastering it.

He quite forgot all about the little pleasure he had promised himself of looking for the two wives who, with their husbands and children, had been the recipients of his generosity.

He could just imagine how they would enjoy the show—for Jerry was a staunch believer in the alluring wonders of the show in the eyes of

other people. He had meant to bring in a bit of "gag" about them, just for the fun of seeing how surprised they looked at their story being known, and because, with pardonable vanity, he thought their country minds might attach more importance to the event, and look with greater awe at his antics, if they knew that it was actually one of the performers who had spoken to them, as it had done in the case of Old Joe, the carter, on that day when he had given Jerry and Lizette a ride in his hay waggon, and afterwards paid a visit to the circus by the former's express invitation.

But, though in a conspicuous position such as his kindness had procured for them, the two families were feasting both eyes and ears on the wonders before them, the clown never so much as looked their way, and to this day, when they speak of the grand things they saw, they wonder who it was to whom they owed their pleasure.

And, curiously enough, just at the back of these two families were the half-a-dozen jolly girls—this time under the chaperonage of a stout lady and a happy-looking gentleman—enjoying for the last time the performance, and bestowing their applause with right goodwill.

But Jerry never saw them either, or he might have wondered whether any of their sharp eyes had seen what, perhaps, was not visible to other people—whether any of them had been able, by means of Lizette's pale face and altered manner, to add another chapter to the little romance they had woven all in sport. No, Jerry was in no

mood for such outside thoughts. Under these circumstances, perhaps the most advisable thing he could have done would have been to have given up his turn entirely, but this he would not do. He had a kind of feeling that he must be near Lizette—if anything went wrong during Bonfire's performance; if, as was not unlikely after what had occurred, she lost her nerve, which in a performance like hers was the very worst thing that could happen, he should somehow imagine it was his fault were he absent, or, at least, that it might not have happened had he been by.

So disregarding the twinges of pain which his injured foot had more than once given him as a reminder that he had better not attempt too much, he returned at a moment's notice to his old antics and jokes, and if the latter had a less hearty ring about them he covered it by an extra number of somersaults and nimble jumps, for often, in such cases where the heart is concerned, the body is far more obedient than the mind.

How was it to be expected that he could give the well-worn wheezes with as much point as usual when his confusion of thought was so new to him? It is time only that gives the power to act our parts and hide our aching hearts beneath a laughing exterior. It was small wonder if sometimes his tricks and wheels were brought to an abrupt conclusion, because he began his evolutions always with a glance at the white strange face under the shining helmet which glittered so

gaily in the gaslight—a face which was before his eyes when all else had become a mist, because of his rapid movement from hands to feet—over and over.

All the while, too, that Bonfire was making the circle of the ring, the young clown followed every movement of his rider with ever-watchful eyes. Once, when she seemed to slip a little in her seat when Bonfire swerved slightly in taking one of his leaps, he started forward with a cry of terror, which was fortunately drowned by the music; and when, the next minute, Lizette brought the horse to a standstill, he (Jerry) had to be called to a sense of where he was by a friendly nudge from Will Breakneck.

CHAPTER IX.

GOING HOME.

JERRY'S fears, however, proved to be totally unfounded. Bonfire's behaviour was all that could have been wished ; and, in fact, the whole performance was pronounced highly satisfactory—at least, so far as Lizette was concerned. I am not sure but what, under any other circumstances, Jerry's share in it might not have called forth expressions of warm disapproval from Mr Petman. As it was, however, that gentleman had too vivid a recollection of the thrashing which he had so narrowly escaped receiving at the young clown's hands, to venture upon even so much as a quiet remonstrance.

It is my opinion that had a few more of the company treated the manager to a little of the spirit of defiance of my hero—(I will call him so now, although his circumstances have by no means altered, and he was in outward appearance as unprepossessing as ever)—had a few of his fellows exhibited as much pluck as my hero did, their

master would have had fewer outbursts of passion chronicled against him.

There is nothing overawes a passionate man like an exhibition of force equal to his own, and I verily believe, had Jerry only been allowed to give him the thrashing he so richly deserved, he (Jerry) might from that day forth have ruled in the show as king in place of his cowed superior.

As it was, however, I fear his well-meant efforts were as likely as not to produce ill rather than good effects. Mr Petman would undoubtedly be subdued for a time, but that would not prevent him nursing his feelings, and venting them at some future period.

At last Lizette was permitted to retire from the ring, preceded by Jerry, who, without stopping to claim any share of the applause, slipped out unceremoniously by skipping over the velvet edge, so that when, after her third recall, Bonfire disappeared for the last time within the velvet curtains, he was ready at hand to take the good horse's bridle and assist his rider to dismount. "Thank goodness, that's over," he said, as, letting her hand rest lightly on his shoulder, Lizette reached the ground.

"Yes," she said, becoming again, now she was behind the scenes, the same drooping, listless girl, "that is over." And she sighed heavily, no doubt applying her words to some other affair than that of her late performance.

At that moment Carl Hermann was heard speaking sharply to one of the men. During

Bonfire's performance he had made himself scarce, either because of a few remarks which had reached his ears while in the ante-room, which had made it seem advisable that he should do so, or because he really did not care, after what had occurred, to come either in the way of his father-in-law or of Lizette Hartzmann.

At the sound of his voice the latter put out her hand hastily for her cloak, which Jerry was holding for her, and almost without waiting for him to fold it round her, turned quickly away, and once more disappeared through the entrance. Jerry stood looking after her long after the curtains had hidden the scarlet dress from view. He was debating in his own mind whether or not he ought to put that question he had been so near asking in the stables.

He knew—at least thought—he was a big, blundering fool, who was as likely as not, in trying to repair an evil, only to make it worse. I do not mean to say that he expected his offer would at once be accepted, and the whole complexion of affairs be altered because of it; nay, he was quite prepared to be refused. But still there was that lingering sort of feeling that it was the only way he had got of showing Lizette at once what the true state of his feelings towards her were. Perhaps by-and-by it might induce her to think more kindly of him than she seemed to do at present.

That sigh and second meaning to his very innocent remark, "That's all over," followed by her sudden change of manner at the sound of the

riding-master's voice, almost settled the question.

He, however, put in a conditional clause, which made him set off to his dressing-room, and in double-quick time tear off his motley garments, slip into his ordinary suit, and then, with great haste, betake himself to the gate of the Gardens, there to wait until the little Fay of Fire should pass out.

He had not long to play sentinel. A few moments' walking impatiently up and down, and he espied the figure he knew so well coming towards him, down the wide road.

As he watched her coming, he recalled to mind the picture which had so cheered his heart in the morning—the slight figure clad in the pretty light dress, with its soft lace and bright ribbons; the bewitching little hat, with its drooping feathers, shading the smiling happy face, walking along in the sunlight by the side of the tall, handsome lover. Now she came slowly, wearily along, in the darkness, alone, with a long dusky cloak hiding the pretty summer dress, a little round hat, faded and shabby, on her head, over which a thick veil looked like a thick mask, and entirely hid her face. Touched inexpressibly by the dreariness of the whole, Jerry waited until she was some steps near him before he moved.

Then he started as though she was the last person he expected to see, mumbled out some excuse about promising to wait for Will Breakneck, and ended his clumsy bit of acting by asking,

in a most humble tone, if, since she was going his way, he might walk with her.

Though in her heart, no doubt, Lizette would far rather have been alone, she made no resistance, and together they passed out of the gate into the crowded streets.

They did not talk much—each was too much occupied with his and her own thoughts—but now and then Lizette sighed heavily, then turned her head quickly away as if to hide the sound. Jerry each time glanced stealthily round at her, with a queer expression in his grey-green eyes; but always seeing her little veiled face turned away, he vented his feelings in a whistle—this, as we know, not from any want of tact on his part, but because it was his way of expressing his thoughts. One might have told that these were just now unusual ones, because he trilled the same air over and over again, without indulging in any of those wonderful and ingenious variations which it was his wont to use, and always in a low key and very softly.

It was a pity that Lizette did not understand her friend better than she did—that she had no thought for any one just then but for him who was unworthy of it, for then she might perhaps have discovered the meaning of the strange expression on Jerry's face which had so puzzled her for the moment when they had been in the stables, but which was put out of her head by other things—for it was that expression that came into it every time he turned his face towards her, only she would

keep her head turned away and her veil so closely down over her eyes.

Altogether the walk did not commence promisingly. Nor did matters mend when, before they had got many yards from the Gardens, Jerry's injured foot began again to give him those sharp reminders of Daystar's "little tribute of affection"—reminders which got sharper and sharper at every step he took.

Added to this, in spite of the beautiful day it had been, it began to rain—not a downright determined shower, but a steady, sullen drizzle, just sufficient to cause one discomfort, especially if, as was the case with our two friends, they were minus protection against it in the shape of umbrellas. Still, as Lizette did not seem to mind much, only drew her cloak closer round her and trudged on silently, Jerry was quite content to limp along by her side, with the raindrops running round the brim of his hat and trickling in a most heartless fashion over his collar and down his neck.

At length, however, a more than usually deep sigh—a very, very near relation to a sob—fell upon his ear. Jerry could stand it no longer. He turned suddenly towards his companion, and laid one hand on her arm. "Lizette," he began, but what else he was going to add was lost in a very prolonged "Oh——," drawn from him by a more than usually prolonged twinge in his foot, which caused him to suddenly come to a standstill, remaining on one leg while he drew the troublesome

member up from the ground. "What is it?" asked Lizette, visibly startled, and at last turning to face him.

I don't know what Jerry intended to say, but I suppose it struck him that standing on one leg in the rain in a crowded street, where people were hurrying up and down fighting excitedly with wet umbrellas, were hardly favourable conditions for any lengthened conversation.

"What's the matter?" he repeated, making a wry face. "Why, I'm afraid my foot's going to be troublesome. Suppose we take a 'bus the rest of the way?"

Lizette hesitated, as though walking along in the dreary street was more in keeping with her mood than jolting along in an omnibus; but while she was saying something about an errand she had to do on her way—that Jerry had better ride—it was no use hurting his foot—she did not at all mind the walk alone—she was used to it—the clown discovered that the shabby little velvet hat was being completely done for, while the brown cloak under his hand was fast getting wet through. He took matters into his own hands, hailed an omnibus just then passing, with, fortunately, two vacant seats, and quietly assisted Lizette into it, following with care himself.

Of course he had given his companion the most comfortable seat—the one in the corner, where she was out of the glare of the lamp—while he took his place between two stout women with babies. The former (meaning the mothers) were very tired

and hot, the latter (meaning the babies, of course) very tired and hot also, besides being very cross.

I wonder why it is that babies have such a distinct dislike to a crowd? There never was, to my certain knowledge, one of these small specimens of human nature in a well-filled compartment of any sort but what it completely upset every one by its unseemly behaviour.

What can be more trying to the nerves of any one—especially a tired business man—than when he has indulged in the luxury of a “bus,” to find himself imprisoned opposite to a wailing, passionate infant, who loudly demands to be tossed up and down, and have all the whole dictionary of baby language talked at it, every now and then giving vent to its feelings by throwing itself back in its mother’s arms with a force which makes every one start, and say in a subdued whisper, “Mind its back,” and putting its sticky, dirty little face as near into your own as possible.

I verily believe that were an omnibus company to be started by whose rules children under a certain age were prohibited from riding in their vehicles, the fortunes of the shareholders would be made in a week by the numbers of people who would hail the reform as a godsend.

Jerry, as will be guessed, had no particular objection to children as a rule; nay, for a bachelor, he was usually supposed to have a strong secret predilection for them, but even his state of mind—by no means soothed by the pain in his foot—was not equal to the powers of tormenting ex-

hibited by the offspring of the two ladies on either side of him.

Not only was he literally being squeezed flat between the two portly figures of the latter, but every other second, by a dexterous movement, one or the other, sometimes both, of the babies would cast themselves back into his lap.

For this each mother, in turn, apologised in becoming terms, but being afraid lest an affable reply should bring about a detailed conversation to the various merits and demerits of such little animals, he contented himself by merely nodding in answer.

At length, however, even his slight annoyance was overcome—one infant having dropped to sleep, the other became more and more boisterous in its alternate fits of grief and glee. Now, it so happened that opposite to its mother was a tall, thin, hungry-looking man, very genteelly dressed in black, with a high collar, black gloves, and eye-glasses, which he balanced with great care upon the tip of his very thin nose, while he read with great deliberation an evening paper.

As ill-luck would have it, the wide-awake baby seemed to have conceived a sudden dislike for this same expansive sheet, and began with much ardour to turn its jerks in that direction.

Three or four times it planted its shiny bald head in the offending article, each time causing the reader to give a start of disagreeable surprise, while his glasses were snatched from his nose, and each time he (the gentleman) replaced his *pince-*

nez, smoothed out his paper, cast a wrathful glance in the offender's direction, and returned to his reading.

The deliberation with which he went through this action on each occasion of the infant's performance decreased, as the wrath conveyed in his glance increased.

At length it seemed human nature could stand it no longer. After a fifth repetition of the same, he folded up his paper, rammed his glasses into his pocket, pulled the conductor savagely by the arm, and muttering between his teeth something about "babies ought to be made to go outside," descended from the vehicle.

His remark called forth many comments from his late fellow-passengers, who, not having suffered the inconvenience he had undergone, declared he was "a hard-hearted brute," it was "most unfeeling," "so long ago since he was a child himself he didn't remember it," and such like expressions of ready-made wit and sympathy.

The baby, however, having now turned its attention to making violent attacks upon the bonnet of a lady seated next to its mother, the said lady getting every moment more crimson and angry in the face under the determined pokes, prods, and snatches of the wet fat fingers, Jerry, taking advantage of the 'bus being in a very dark street, where the lamps were few and far between, offered to relieve the poor tired mother of her burden.

At first she was good-natured enough to be loath to trouble him, but alarmed by angry mut-

terings on the part of the wearer of the bonnet, Jerry forcibly took the matter and the child into his hands, whereat the mother shook out her rumpled skirts and re-arranged her toilet in the patient way mothers of large families acquire, and the lady on her left considerably relieved the fears of a meek-looking young man on her left by removing her substantial form a few inches off the angular-looking parcel which he held with so much mysterious care on his knee. And, wonderful to relate, whether it was that there was a soothing influence in being held in such a strong firm hold, which made jerks impossible, I, also having with the would-be reader of the *Evening News* left my childhood's days somewhat behind me cannot say, but when the omnibus rattled and groaned out into the glare of the High Street, there was the demon of the 'bus sleeping the sleep of the innocent, if looking hardly as sweet as a rose-bud, on account of its late exertions, but all the same asleep and powerless in our hero's arms.

So great was the relief expressed on the faces around him, more especially on those of the worried mother and the lady in the bonnet (the other ladies in the omnibus had similar headgear, but I refer to the bonnet beloved by the baby), that presently these latter began to chat quite affably, and parted with a far better opinion of each other's feelings as parents than they would otherwise have done had it not been for Jerry's heroism.

Knowing this, Jerry ought to have felt very

contented. He did for the space of a few minutes ; after that time, had any one taken particular notice they might have wondered why his complexion had suddenly become of such a deep crimson hue, more so than usual—in fact, far outrivalling that of the lady in the bonnet.

And what do you think was the cause? None other than that while examining with masculine curiosity the tiny fat and dirty little face which rested on his sleeve, the thought had occurred to him how a man must feel when he knows that time will reproduce in this miniature his own features, with perhaps a better nature beneath ; that it is his child to train as he will ; to be his pride and support in old age ; and all of a sudden instead of being softened by the idea, it seemed to him out of place and thoughtless to think of such happiness when other people were so unhappy. He felt as if he should let the sleeping baby fall, so bashful had he become of his burden.

He was not, however, kept long in his anxious state. At the end of the High Street the conductor poked a streaming hat and face in at the window, and asked, or rather growled, in that peculiarly gruff voice natural to conductors, “An’ one outside—oblige lady,” meaning, of course, would any one take a seat outside in the wet to oblige a lady.

There were at least half-a-dozen “gentlemen” in the ’bus besides our friend Jerry, who ought really to have made the sacrifice, considering the state of the weather, that it was the last ’bus that

night, and the lady was a poor infirm old woman, scantily dressed, and already soaking wet through, and in danger of a nice attack of her old enemy rheumatics, because of her want of a "gamp," but each of these specimens of the sterner and self-denying sex, the meek-faced bearer of the parcel included, stared blankly at each other, without stirring.

Up jumped Jerry, transferred his burden skillfully from his own arms to the motherly ones outstretched to relieve him of it with many grateful thanks, vacated his cosy seat, carefully assisted into it the lady, whose eyes brightened like two sparks accidentally fallen among some dry, wrinkled leaves, at the prospect of being able to perform the rest of her journey in comfort, although she was too old and crabbed to say "thank you," for Jerry's kindness, indeed called him rather sharply a young fool when, in his blundering good-nature, he trod on her ragged, trailing skirt, and took his solitary seat on the top of the vehicle on a soaking wet cushion, with the rain taking the remains of the starch out of his collar, and his foot, owing to his hurried ascent to his perch in response to a gruff, "Look sharp, can't yer; I don't want to stay here all night," from the conductor, giving him more and more decided reminders of his late imprisonment.

After having more than once echoed the conductor's sentiments relative to his remaining on the omnibus all night, Jerry at last saw the hospitable lights of Mrs Parkins's lodging-house in the

distance, and in a few minutes made his way down the slippery staircase on to the step.

Here he paused to get his change for his fare, having purposely given the man a shilling in order that he might have time to do so, while he poked his head in at the window to say good-night to Lizette.

There she was in the distant dark corner looking vacantly out of the window, evidently having forgotten his very existence.

"Here, I forgot," he said to the conductor, who had just given him his change, "I must pay for that young lady in the corner."

In the interval thus employed, he thrust his head in at the window again and called out in his cheery tone, "Good night, mother," to the stout old woman whose baby he had nursed, not, however, venturing to cast another glance in the same sleeping infant's direction.

The sound of his voice roused Lizette. She looked up quickly and returned Jerry's nod without speaking.

As she did so the light of a passing cab-lamp flashed on her face, and so overcome was our hero by its pallor beneath the old veil, and the weariness even in so slight a gesture, that he forgot to tell her he had paid her fare—he would have said "made it all right," with a gesture in the conductor's direction. The consequence was that on arriving at her destination that worthy, whether from having a bad memory, which I cannot think he had, because it must have severely interfered

with his business, or from a desire to profit by other people's forgetfulness—not being given to studying human nature I am not at liberty to say—at any rate the conductor redemanded his charge, which, of course, Lizette paid.

But to make up for the baseness and trickery of the conductor, I may say that Jerry's exit, or rather alighting, was the signal for more than one good-natured comment from those whom he had benefited.

The mothers hugged their still sleeping children to them and agreed that he was a "pleasant-spoken young man—seemed as though he were mighty fond of children—perhaps he was just married himself, or if not, would make a rare good husband and a father for children to be proud of, if ever Providence did bless him with blessings in the shape of likenesses to himself," and so on.

How Jerry would have blushed could he have heard them. Perhaps it was as well he couldn't.

And yet there was some one in the crowded omnibus on whose ears these words might have fallen with pleasure, for who would not have been happy to call such a "pleasant-spoken young man" their friend?

But though Lizette heard, she did not heed, nor smile as she would have done so short a time before.

She heard, I say, but the next moment forgot the words; whether she ever had reason afterwards to recall them remains to be seen, for her mind was full of that one thought, which was,

perhaps, but natural to one of her nature—what was there worth living for now? Why had she ever lived to see the lamp of her life's happiness go out so suddenly?

Ah! it was cruel—cruel—for her to have been treated so. She had loved Carl, oh, so much, so very much, better than any one in the world—there was no one she could ever love besides. If only he had not said what he had, so much and yet so little. If only he had come to her and told her he must marry the handsome rich manager's daughter she would have said—yet no—she would not have been able to tell him to go. And now he had gone of his own will, and, oh, over and over again it came, all through that long night of dreary weeping which followed that stony self-composure, the unconsciousness of one who does not fully comprehend. “Oh, it was cruel—cruel—for I loved him so.”

But Jerry never knew of this wild agony and bitterness. He had accepted his own fate so quietly that it did not seem strange to him that Lizette should do the same. His honest, kindly heart was too full of what that day had brought to have a thought for anything else. Had he been a philosopher—that is, had he been given to taking his religion straight from the Bible, instead of from his own conscience—not that I doubt one is as good as the other—he would have been justified in saying that sufficient unto those twelve hours had been the evil thereof.

His wet dreary drive had somewhat reduced his

spirits, which hitherto he had felt bound to keep up, because he wisely concluded it would not mend matters to give way. But now he was soaking wet through, tired, with the pain in his foot every moment increasing, disappointed in what he had looked forward to, stunned and bewildered at the wickedness of some people in the world, full of pity for the innocent victim of the evil, and out of heart at not having been able to offer the consolation he so longed to do.

So there he stood on the wet pavement watching the omnibus disappear in the distance, and feeling somehow as though every step the tired horses took as they carried Lizette away in their wake, was but emblematical of the steps which circumstances had taken to cut him off from her altogether.

He did not even try to shake off this mood, but limped a sorry figure into his lodgings, where, escaping as soon as possible from Mrs Parkins's well-meant questioning as to his welfare since he had started out, evading her inquiries as to how the tricks had gone, he retreated to his own room. As soon as he was able—namely, as soon as he had partaken of the huge glass of something hot and strong which the good lady had prepared for him, and in spite of all his troubles too tired in both mind and body to keep awake any longer, ere long he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER X.

A FALSE STEP.

“AND of course,” I think I hear my reader say, “Jerry woke up the next morning feeling quite himself again; he slipped into his old place in the show, the ring-master and his wife were got out of the way somehow, till Lizette like a sensible girl forgot all her feelings for the former, or at least thought better of her love for him, and let Jerry win his way step by step until he quite stole her heart away, and they were married and lived happily ever after.”

I only wish I could say fate was as kind as my reader, for then much pain and sorrow might have been saved; but there is an evil genius as well as a good one which rules our lives, and so I fear, to tell my tale truthfully, I must say that my reader is mistaken.

If Jerry's intention was to do as stated above, his hopes were sadly doomed to disappointment.

On the morning following the night which brought such strange things to light, he certainly

did wake, but as certainly not feeling himself again. It was in fact to find himself a prey to far worse pains in his foot than any he had yet experienced, to say nothing of a severe cold which he had caught during his wet ride.

He tried, however, with his usual cheeriness to make the best of things, declared his cold would be all right on the morrow, while a little more of the doctor's stuff applied to his foot would soon reduce it to order.

His hopes seemed likely to be fulfilled in one direction but not so in the other. His cold seemed but a slight affair; but as that grew better his foot grew rapidly worse, indeed the pain became so unbearable that he readily consented to once more putting himself under the doctor's hands.

That gentleman was accordingly sent for, and came on his way to evening church, it being Sunday.

He examined the foot, asked many questions relative to what use it had been put on the day before, all of which Jerry very reluctantly and with not a little misgiving answered, and ended by shaking his head ominously, in a way which froze the marrow in our hero's bones—at the same time rendering him unusually passionate—and was at length induced to give his verdict.

As before, he used a lot of technical language—so inwardly did Jerry—the long and the short of which was that his evil prophecies had come true; of course the unfeeling fiend could not avoid looking a little pleased that they had—no

one could blame him for feeling glad at this triumph; Jerry's injudicious use of the injured member had undone all the good that had been done, and unless, as mentioned before, he chose to run the risk of being lame for life, he must submit quietly to go through a more lengthened term of imprisonment than hitherto.

If before the knowledge of his doom had had a most direful effect upon the young clown, his feelings on the former occasion were nothing to those which now filled his breast.

The show started on its wanderings on the morrow and he should be let behind! Lizette would go without him—without any one to be her true friend—alone with people who perhaps meant well, but might not always act so—alone when she was most in need of some one to stand by her, to help and encourage her in her hour of trial—alone, every day to see the man who was to have been her husband—who had won her heart and then flung it back at her—see the false lover, friend, and man fawn and hang round his handsome wife and bestow upon her the caresses that once had been hers—to know what he was to her, and what he was to himself—the treacherous, mean hound.

Yes, day by day Lizette would have to meet him as a stranger, and all so soon after—yesterday, when she had imagined like Jerry that her fears had been silly and groundless; that if, as she had done lately, her little heart had been made to flutter sadly because the proud

manager's daughter had demanded of him some service, or because he had been less ready to pay her the many little attentions he had been wont to claim so eagerly till Miss Petman came, those tears she had let fall were but idle, ungrateful ones; it was her silly jealousy had made the clouds gather and cast a shadow; then the sunshine of the love she craved had cast its beams around once more, and the sky was clear again. Now it is no dream, no fancy of her own making, the storm has fallen without a word of warning on her head, and she must bear its fury alone, when a strong kindly soul was so ready and willing to be at her side to soothe and cheer her, to fight her battles—to be as he has ever been, her friend.

For some time after the doctor left, Jerry had a very bad half-hour, the usual *quart d'heure* was not sufficient for him, the fury into which he worked himself causing his landlady no little anxiety lest he was sickening for an attack of brain fever.

At first he swore he would go with the show, nothing on earth should stop him, he'd go if he went on his head (which remark, as we know, he could easily have carried out), he'd see the doctor hanged before he obeyed him, he was an old fool and a swindler, who thought his patient was a fool or a baby to be ordered about as he chose. This statement he repeated at least half-a-dozen times, each time in a more forcible manner, at last working himself up to such a pitch that in spite

of all Mrs Parkins could say he got up and essayed to walk across the room to try his powers.

The first two or three steps were all right, at the fourth he had a sharp warning that he had better desist, but disregarding it, he tried one more, with the result of his executing a most in-artistic fall on to the floor, where he sat for some moments holding his injured member with both hands, his mouth twisted up into a most curious shape, his face getting every moment of a deeper scarlet hue with each spasm of pain. After this, he gave up all thoughts of taking another step, allowed himself to be helped back to his chair, like a lame dog to his kennel as he phrased it, where he not too graciously dismissed his willing nurses, and alone in the dingy little parlour, gave himself up to such a fit of the sulks as he had never been known to indulge in before.

As, however, this way of venting his feelings did no harm to any one, but only made him feel very much ashamed of himself afterwards, he might have pitched upon a worse.

At any rate it sucessfully cleared the atmosphere. After that half-hour he was a wiser, if a sadder man. With the utmost humility he promised obedience to every order of the doctor's, astonishing that gentleman—who had previously looked upon this patient as one of the very rough-and-ready sort—by his politeness and courtesy when next he paid him a visit.

He also resolved to attend to every direction and suffer resignedly the queer sensations up and

down his back which the application of some of the remedies produced, and vowed that nothing in the world should make him walk on two feet again until he had the doctor's full permission.

Having thus, as he called it, given himself up to his tormentors, Jerry saw the day go by with calm resignation—in his determination to be perfectly patient giving himself no chance to escape from what, had he been poetically inclined, he might have called “the chains of fate.”

In his stupidity it never occurred to him to make an effort to see the object of all his uneasiness. Truth to tell, as it is very often the case, the reflections of the evening before assumed a very different complexion in the sober light of the morning.

Thus Jerry's very rosy plan for the promotion of his own and Lizette's future happiness, which had seemed so very delightful on the night before, now appeared in a very different garb. It seemed to him that in his excitement he had been guilty of a piece of selfishness, in which he placed his own happiness far before that of the person most concerned—namely, Lizette. How was it likely, he said to himself, as he recalled the white, wan face which had haunted him the whole night through—how was it likely the little German girl would so soon recover from the blow she had received? What a fool he had been even to dream of it—nay, worse than a fool—what did he not deserve for his selfish plans. How lucky it

was that circumstances had conspired to defeat his object!

Indeed, so great was his remorse for his now so greatly distorted intentions, that the whole tenor of his thoughts assumed a different shape—the hopes of a few hours before were shattered once more, and new and what seemed to him far wiser resolutions adopted.

What a pity it is some of us will not be content to be guided by impulse, but persist in shaping our courses for ourselves, instead of trusting in the hand of fate, Providence, or whatever it is that shapes our destinies for us.

Thus with a remorseless hand Jerry once more set to work to pull down his castles in the air, and in their place erected a sort of makeshift building which he fondly imagined would endure for ever and afford ample protection for all his few wishes and fears for the future.

Thus it was that he quietly accepted his fate—keeping one thought only present in his mind. It was this—that since it was not his luck (so he had decided) to have the greatest desire of his life granted, he was not going to waste his life in idle fretting over either his own ill lot or, what was far worse, that of the little fancy-rider; but where he couldn't be anything nearer, he'd be what was next best, a true friend and a brother so long as he had breath left in his body to be so.

But even this resolve he had decided to keep a secret, so cautious had he become all of a sudden, not thinking that if the burden of a nearer

relationship might have been irksome to Lizette, the knowledge that she had one true, devoted friend in the world which seemed so dreary and bare to her now, could not have been without comfort to her. But it is just like this, that when over-daring might be pardoned, we often err on the side of over-caution.

So the day went by very slowly for Jerry, and still more so for a weary little lovelorn damsel in a still more lonely lodging in the little country town.

And while I am upon the subject, no doubt my reader is anxious for some elucidation of the conduct of my fine gentlemanly young ring-master. This, I fear, is impossible.

It may be implied that I am prejudiced somewhat in favour of my hero because he is a good-natured sort of fellow, whom nature has not treated very liberally as regards outward exterior, hence my reason for making him out to be far from an Adonis, while by the rule of contraries the villain of my play is so much his opposite.

Judging from this it would seem that in looking round us for those we should trust, we should place our faith in those whose claim as ornaments to society is small; but such is not the case. I am only stating facts as they are known to me, and can only regret that my hero can never be anything but a very common-place circus clown, living his life as best he knew how, like most of us, and only feeling what any of us would have done under the same circumstances—especially with such an influence as the little German girl's

to bear upon him, in the same degree as even the tiniest rushlight will have upon the gloom of a darkened room, yet such as will be utterly unnoticed before the overpowering glare of a flaring gas-lamp.

Such may have been the young ring-master's comparison between the two women with whom he had been brought in contact; but what had led him to act as he did, it is difficult to say.

It has been pleaded before now, that even a man's love may be blinded and dazzled by the brightness of a totally unexpected prospect of social advantages. The question has been argued too often for me to attempt to take up one side or the other. My reader must form what conclusion he or she is able, by looking at the plain facts of the case in what light they appear to him or her.

It is an indisputable point that until he chose to favour the little fancy-rider with his attentions, the young German had been somewhat disdainful in his relations with any of the fairer sex. What, then, could have been his reason for a change in his habits? It might certainly have been the sympathy which a stranger in a foreign land unconsciously feels in one of his fellow-countrymen, but then his conduct on their first meeting certainly goes against him.

Even allowing for the excuses which Lizette herself made for him on that occasion, had not Jerry more than one proof that the intercourse was something more than a mere friendship

founded on the sympathy of having the same land as a birthplace?

To tell the truth, I do not believe this consideration had any weight with the young German. To me his view of the case must either have been pure love, such as any one who came in daily contact with Lizette might have easily entertained, or else a more worldly sense of the advantages she had over the rest of the company: how useful she would be supposing he (the ring-master) was ever able to scrape up enough money—he was by no means an extravagant fellow—to start a show on his own account, which, by dint of great perseverance, he should raise to a point of far greater celebrity than that of Charles Petman himself.

Nowadays, when old-fashioned chivalry is quite an exploded idea, no one can blame a man for looking to his interests, even in the circumstances of his marriage—it is far better in some people's opinion to live contentedly than blissfully—but I for one rebel against the idea of any one placing my heroine's social worth against the love which she above many others was calculated to inspire.

To tell the truth, I don't believe Carl Hermann ever entertained such ambitious ideas of bettering himself, as the saying goes. He was quite content to live and let live, so long as he did not have to exert himself too much. His was just one of those natures which drift along with the current without any effort, but will often float into a safe harbour, that others have striven for in vain.

It is as likely as not that even while submitting

to be led away by the charm of sweet little Lizette's manner, he would shake his head and say to himself that he was a fool, only the next moment to give way to the impulse which led him to hold out such hopes to the only too happy girl as would set her heart beating with wild delight for the happy future which was opening out before her.

What was to be the end of it all may or may not have concerned him. It is as likely as not that by-and-by his natural indolence might have been conquered by Lizette, and they would have been married, whether happily or not it is impossible to say; more likely than 'not, with such a wife for a guiding star of his existence—for women are but better angels clad in a mortal dress lest our poor consciences should take fright at their purity in contrast to our own darker hue—but all the same, time had gone on and that sacred promise which was to be the first link in the chain which was to bind them together had never been uttered.

Of course there had been hints, and vague surmises, and such like dimly-expressed dreams in which all lovers are prone to indulge; but what else had Lizette to show of what had been her one thought for so long? A few dead flowers and one or two hastily-written notes—that was all, unless one throws into the scale bitter memories of what was and still more bitter ones of what have been.

It is, perhaps my reader will say, only the fate which more than one too confiding nature has been the victim of; but I ask in return, does that

make it any the less hard for my heroine to bear?

It was, then, hard for her? Yes, very hard ; the struggle such as only those who have gone through it can tell.

The sky had been so very bright once in those days gone by, when in the depth of her foolish little heart Lizette had said, "Carl loves me, he is my Carl. He calls me *meine geliebte*, my beloved, my little one, my all in all," and ever so many pretty, endearing names, to say nothing of the many kisses he snatched from the soft cheeks which needed no touch of rouge to heighten their rosiness.

That was what had once been ; what is that? She is nothing to him now ; she may not even think too much of what might have been, for he is her lover no longer, but the husband of the proud manager's daughter ; may not say to him of the sorrow which is in her heart, for he will not care to hear ; who knows but that perhaps he may laugh at her, perhaps even now he has done so with his beautiful wife because she, poor, insignificant little Lizette, does not quite know how to speak the hard English. Laugh? Yes, laugh at her ; and at the thought the hot blood burnt in the pale cheeks for a moment, then died away, leaving them pale and colourless as before. Yes, he might laugh. Then again came the old thought, "And I loved him so," uttered, oh so wearily, while the aching head was pillowed on two cold hands. "Oh, if I could only go away, right away where no one knew, where no one smiled kindly at me, but fond

to joke when they thought I could not hear ; they heard what he" (Mr Petman) "said on that night" (there is no need to say what she meant), and again the fiery flush rose, and the breast beneath the sober black dress rose and fell with a wave of passionate wildness which daily became more violent. "Do they say with him I brought it to myself?—I flung myself to him?—I was a silly—fool? Was not he the first to pay the court, not I? but yet—I loved him so, I may not have known what came. But I cannot have been unlike other girls ; I used to say to myself, Lizette, Lizette, you are silly, he cares not so much for you as if you were his little finger, and I used to say he will not come and walk and talk with you to-night, nor bring the flowers, or say pretty things and call you 'darling' like he did last night, he was in play then, he has tired of the fun, you are silly Lizette, he will not come to-night ; that is what I said, but I would watch for him, I would tell he was near because my heart went, I knew not why, pit-pat, so fast—so fast—so that when he came I had no words to say him 'good-day,' but when he did not come I felt as though all the lights were gone out, the music was not sweet, but loud, it deafened me, and I would long to run away and hide myself. Yes, I loved him so much and more, more than any one in the world, and now he is her husband ; they say he is happy, he will be rich and she is beautiful, and I must meet them face to face each day, and he is nothing to me, he does not love me, he never did, they say, or he would not have

done as he has done, it was only acting to please me, men often do it for fun, but it is fun I cannot feel to laugh at, it was cruel, because he might have seen it, how I loved him, oh, so much. I have no one else in all the world."

Such was poor little Lizette's cry, perhaps only the echo of many such as she who have been betricked and befooled by their too great faith, but nevertheless, none the less full of bitterness because of that reason.

For not only was there that dreariness which naturally succeeds such a blow, but there was also that sense of loneliness and utter friendliness which was doubly strong in her case, both because of the way her whole life had been bound up in her lover's, and because in reality she was alone and friendless. "How could I help loving him? I had no one else in all the world."

If only Jerry in his wiseacre mood could have heard that despairing cry!

But he did not. He shut himself up in his prison, as he called it, waiting with as much patience as he could scrape together till he should be once more free and able to begin the task he had set himself of being Lizette's friend.

As regards the length of time he was to occupy this position, he did not stay to ask himself, he only knew that the little German girl wanted a friend and protector, and that was what he was going to be, to the exclusion of all other thoughts, which had once filled him with such expectation and delight.

But Lizette, as I have said, did not know this. So the days passed slowly away for both, one longing for comfort, the other only too willing to give it, but both kept apart by the tide of circumstance on one side, and by matter-of-fact reasoning on the other.

Jerry had hoped that without his adopting a course which was rather out of his new plans, namely, that of sending word to Lizette that he would have liked to have seen her before she started—what was he to say to her when she came, since his was to be a silent brotherly friendship, without protestation of any sort?—Lizette would pay him a visit during the day, but his hopes were doomed to disappointment.

As it happened, Smith, having no suspicion that anything was materially wrong with the young clown, did not of course think of going to see him; indeed, even had he wanted to do so it is doubtful whether he would have been able to carry out his intention, since he was so very actively engaged every moment of the day in the necessary preparations for the departure on the morrow.

After what had occurred, too, the rest of the company fought rather shy of our hero. It might have been that they had a selfish motive for so doing, opining that it would not be in their own interests to make too great a show of cordiality towards the clown, who had openly dared to exhibit such signs of hostility towards their worthy manager.

At any rate, it was not until the next day, at the time of performance, that it was known that Jerry was doomed to a second term of imprisonment, when of course there were too many miles between him and his comrades for a repetition of any visits of consolation.

I am not sure that his absence was not rather a relief than otherwise to all parties concerned. It was easy enough to overlook the presence of one who was only too willing to be allowed to pass in and out to her duties unnoticed; but Jerry's presence would have no doubt been the cause of no little dissension prompted by his manner and bearing towards the manager.

Lizette heard the news too, but she only sighed again, not because she was so very full of grief at the news, but because she was fast getting into the habit of sighing. The fact itself was but one more drop in the cup of bitterness, a very small one in the overwhelming flow which had filled it to the brim. Thus it was that Lizette was left to fight her battle all alone, to meet her trouble face to face, day by day, without any one to fight her battles, or to make an open stand in her defence, because of the fear in which the mighty Charles Petman was held.

It is true that, great favourite as she was, nearly every one was ready to do her any service which might not have caused any prejudice against themselves, but this Lizette either was too proud or too careless to allow.

At least so it appeared; for myself I doubt if

she had any idea of making plans for what was to come. She seemed to those who knew her best to be perfectly content, since it was willed—in spite of her many prayers, that she should not die—to live in the present, striving to forget the past and taking no thoughts for the future.

How many hearts have sought to do the same, and how few have succeeded? To persevere in such a course to the end is not possible. Strive as we will, we must help nature in some way; if we live we must do so in a double sense. Neither of the three sisters can subsist alone. “Is” cannot suffice for us for ever, “Was” and “Will be” must be there also or there will be an end to all.

Lizette in her loneliness and sorrow tried hard to hold out against time, the great doctor of all ills. There are some of us who, when we have been deeply wounded, would rather be left alone to die than go through all the agony of healing, rather than find out then how sharp the blow has been that struck us down; rather than fight the fight back to life, for which we seem neither to have the power nor the interest.

So was it with Lizette. So sorely stricken had she been for one so young and guileless, that even the greatest scoffer at broken hearts could not have looked at the change in her from what she had once been, and not feel pity for one whose sufferings were so legibly written on her features.

No longer the same light-hearted fairy, whose light-heartedness had earned for her the name of

the pride of the show, but white-faced with a drooping figure and slow, lagging tread she went about her duty, always up to time, never failing in her work, but always coming in and out like a shadow, shrinking more and more into herself if, as happened more often than not, she came in contact with either Carl Hermann or his wife, the latter having taken it into her aristocratic head that she would travel a short time with her father's company.

It may be a marvel to some of my readers why this young lady should have chosen so unimportant a personage as the young ring-master for her husband when, according to her father's account, she could have selected a far more distinguished suitor from a crowd of others.

There are two sides to this question. Firstly, it is a matter of question whether this favourite boast of Mr Petman's was of any more value than many others in which he indulged. Secondly, taking for granted that the boast had some foundation, the affair may be explained thus—a view which I think after circumstances tended to confirm. On arriving at her father's show, of which she was to form one of the staple attractions if, as we suppose, she had been used to the court and homage of an acknowledged set of admirers, it was but natural that she should miss the many little attentions to which she had been accustomed. The members of her father's company, though, of course, careful not to be wanting in ordinary civility, or rather the civility to which her position in the show gave her a right, were hardly enough

devoted to their leader to entertain any very cordial feelings for one who, beyond being his relation, inherited many of the least agreeable traits in his character.

Even had they done so, I doubt if their homage would have been at all favourably received by the proud beauty. Yet she was not willing to take her seat upon too high a throne. There was one who on a recent visit to her father had impressed her somewhat favourably, and in lieu of some higher aspirant for the honour, she felt inclined to bestow her favour upon the one man she deemed worthy of it, the young ring-master. To her surprise, and no little annoyance, that gentleman showed no anxiety to occupy the coveted post of her cavalier, which fact in itself was sufficient to arouse her pique, which increased when by-and-by she discovered the reason of his reluctance, namely, in the shape of a prior hold upon his attention. Knowing how little of the true material he possessed—I can hardly say affection—any one who, from what I have already said, has gleaned any insight into her character, will not be surprised at the course she adopted.

How the affair passed from jest to earnest until the all-important step of a secret marriage was accomplished it is impossible to say, unless taking into consideration the fascination which the young German exercised over his little countrywoman, we can imagine that by the same means he managed to sweep away the scruples and worldly views which had been carefully instilled into Rosa

Petman's mind by her father. At any rate, both seemed for the time vastly satisfied with their bargain, were most lover-like in their attentions, although a quick reader of character might have been suspicious of the change in the ring-master's manner, from indolence and indifference to a ready flow of spirits and a devotion towards his wife quite at variance with his usual habits, and in the regal way in which the manager's daughter received his homage, alternately petting and scolding him like one would a pet poodle.

CHAPTER XI.

A MOMENT OF REMEMBRANCE.

OF Mr Petman's conduct during the weeks of Jerry's imprisonment I have not such a favourable report to give.

As I have said, the thrashing which he had so nearly received at the young clown's hands only cowed him for the moment, without leaving any beneficial results.

On the contrary, more especially because her brave protector was not by her side, he used every means in his power to pay off the debt of the insult which Jerry had dared to offer him, upon the head of one whom manliness, if not pity, should have bidden him pass at least unmolested.

Coward that he was, he used no open means to torment his victim, but let his odious power be felt in a thousand little ways, which, like the prick of so many needles, inflicted far more pain than a blow with the keenest-edged sword.

Before "the row," as it was not too elegantly but certainly expressively called, on the show's

last night at the People's Gardens, as we know, he had been wont to look upon the little fancy-rider with favour than otherwise, considering her the smartest rider in the show, and congratulating himself on the good fortune which had led to his picking up such a very desirable acquisition to his company.

Now, however, all was changed. Lizette had suddenly slipped from the high position she had held, and fallen, as it seemed, very low indeed.

As we know, she never failed in her duty, irksome as it had now become, unless it was that the gaiety and light-heartedness which had hitherto characterised her performance, adding alike to its grace and charm, were no longer there. More by force of habit than from any real pleasure at the signs of approbation which were bestowed upon her performance, she responded to the applause which she always earned. Her dress was as neat and as pretty as usual, and if now an unnatural colour burnt in the once rosy cheeks, and one or two other touches of art borrowed from Madame Petite were now discernible upon the pretty face which so lately had required no touch save Nature's to make it all that one would wish to look upon, it was not that Lizette wished to make herself pleasing in the eyes of men—nay, indeed, what did she care now?—but rather that cold inquisitive glances, such as she dreaded, might not read in her face the truth she strove to hide.

For Lizette, after that first night, when she had

learnt her fate, did try to brave it out. What little feeling she had left in her was pride, and night after night she tried to be brave and make an outward show of what she did not feel.

But the task was a hard one, doubly so because of the high and relentless power against which she had to contend. At first she hoped that in time the utter silence with which she accepted covert sneers, jeers, hints, fault-finding, and every form of persecution such as only a nature like the manager's would have dictated, would gain her peace. But such was not the case.

His vigilance increased rather than decreased. It might have been that there was a double reason for this, as certainly after circumstances tended to prove.

Truth to tell, the season of prosperity at the Gardens, during which time the manager had rather given himself up to a period of enjoyment such as he rarely allowed himself to indulge in, was succeeded by an equally prolonged run of ill luck.

Business, in fact, was very bad everywhere, and fearful of losing the ground he had gained, Mr Petman lashed up his team to a great speed, trying place after place, and in fact exerting himself to the very utmost.

But all to no purpose, or to very little. Business, instead of improving, got rather worse, and as a natural, or rather a to-be-expected consequence, the manager's temper did the same. Hitherto, as we know, life with the show had

been none too sweet, but under the foregoing circumstances it was fast becoming unbearable.

To none more so than the poor little fancy-rider.

Poor little Lizette, when afterwards she looked back at those days, she marvelled how it was she had lived through them as she did.

Ah, they were dreary days indeed—when she would sit for hours alone in her dreary lodging in some back street, weary, oh, so weary of the big, big world, of the long endless hours, loving to be alone with no company save her thoughts—and Heaven knows they were none too pleasant—dreading when the time should come to go from the silent solitude of the darkened room out into the noise and bustle and glare of the streets, where, now that the weather had finally broken up, the summer quite gone, more often than not it was to face frost, blinding rain, and biting wind, to say nothing of the not too inviting state of the roads; and then an even more trying ordeal, when the sober every-day dress—Lizette's pretty costumes had been laid aside, she scarce knowing why, donning once more the dingy little frocks which she had so lately laid aside—was exchanged for the fairy robes with their lace and spangles, the pallid cheeks and dark lines hidden under the rouge and powder, and then out into the ante-room to wait in the cold, amidst not too polite fellows, whose tempers were, like that of their head, by no means improved by the weather, to meet as a stranger, at least to all appearances, the

man who once had been the first to wait upon her presence and deplore her absence, to see him heaping his attentions on his wife, a slave to her caprice, submitting even to be bullied and trampled upon by his father-in-law, above all to be the butt of a spite which was malicious enough to be perfectly inhuman.

Could only that brave heart, undergoing equally unwillingly a like imprisonment, have known how dreary as he had drawn the picture of Lizette's life, his colours were many times too bright! Could only he have known how much the forlorn little German girl was in need of a friend, he would have risked the pair of crutches which the doctor suspended over his head, like two copies of the sword of Damocles—if I may be permitted to make the comparison—risked! Jerry would have risked everything he possessed, his very life, to have gone to her aid.

But he did not know, he only lived out the long days alone, and trying hard to be patient till he should be free once more.

For Lizette there was no patience. Through her trial, bitter as it was, her submission was not that of one who willingly bends her neck to the yoke, but rather that of one who has no power to resist the fury of the storm, the bowing of a broken reed, not of a bent one, wanting but a few more blasts to carry away the poor fragile body which had struggled so long. "Is it going to be like this always?" she asked herself one night about two months after the last night at

the Gardens, when cold, tired, and miserable she sat alone as usual in her small room, sitting thinking, thinking, thinking as she was always doing lately, with her head in her hands, a strangely weary attitude, which she had been wont to assume, because it was the only way in which she could find rest for her head, a head which was rarely now without a strange aching pain, which seemed to numb every faculty and make her feverish and dispirited. "Is it always going to be like this? Because I loved him so once, must I be so miserable, so very unhappy now? Shall I never be happy again? It is wicked to love, that one should be punished so hardly. It is not my fault, but it seems as though it is I who have done wrong, so strange are they with me now, as though I had need to be ashamed, and not he."

And so indeed it was. As is more often than not, the innocent was made to suffer for the guilty. A stranger noting the little German girl's relations with her companions, might truly have imagined that she it was who had offended, not the free and easy-going young ring-master, sunning himself in the light of his wife's glory.

"And then Mr Petman," went on Lizette, going over once again a train of thought which was for ever flowing through her mind,—“Mr Petman, what have I done that he should treat me so? Is it because he (Carl) did not care to look at me when Miss Rosa came? How can I help it? How could I try to win him back if he had no wish to

come? But he did not see fit to be to me what he said, and why should they taunt me with it now? Nothing I seem to do is right, no matter how much I try. Surely it cannot be that I am so very changed. This pain in my head; oh, how I wish it would go, but it will not, night and day it is always there; can it be something that will by-and-by become too great for me to bear, and drive me what they call 'silly'?"

And awed by the thought which often comes to us when we are the victim of great mental anguish, Lizette began to make vague comparisons between herself and her devoted servant, the half-witted groom, seeing herself grow less and less what she used to be, losing all power to move or even think for herself, a poor deranged creature to be pitied by some, the butt and laughing-stock of others. The thought may seem a wild one to my reader, reading the plain sober facts of the case as they appear in black and white; but who will not forgive their existence when one calls to mind this poor little stranger in our land, living a life of rough, hard work, fighting the battle of life when she knew so little even how to buckle on her armour, perfectly friendless and unprotected, little more than a child in ways, if passing into womanhood in years, and smarting under the bitterest blow a trusting, faithful heart ever endured.

On the night of which I write, Lizette did not long give way to such ideas, for the striking of a church clock somewhere in the neighbourhood warned her that it was time she set off for the

show, situated in one of the most crowded parts of the town, where a big but somewhat rough audience might be expected.

Once upon a time Lizette would have not feared risking the manager's displeasure by being a few minutes behind time, though her real fault had invariably been that she erred on the right side of punctuality, but now, though she had in reality plenty of time, she started up from her low seat beside a smouldering pretence of a fire, with a nervous haste donned her walking things, and prepared to set off.

It was a pouring wet, miserable night, with a sharp cutting wind blowing, just such a night as that on which we first made my heroine's acquaintance, and certainly not one calculated to revive drooping spirits, or invigorate a weary frame.

So Lizette felt, but endued with the idea that she might be late at the show, and so run the risk of giving the manager a legal right to vent his spite, she struggled bravely on through the surging crowd of dripping figures and interlaced umbrellas, looking forward even to the time when she should be once more on her way home, for then her hard task, for that day at least, would be over.

How she dreaded it all, feeling to-day more spiritless and weary than ever; and how was she to face, as she had done so many times before, her arch enemy and tormentor, Mr Petman?

Night after night she had borne his persecution because she had no power to resist. If only, like other girls, she could have wept out her troubles

in tears, how much better it would have been for her. It would have relieved that aching void in her heart, and lessened the dull, almost blinding pain in her head.

This, to-night as she battled her way through the crowd, seemed almost more than she could bear, and presently losing all consciousness of where she was going, her feet carried her where-soever they would, while the rain poured down on her scantily-protected head—she had long since ceased to try and hold up an umbrella—and the wind drove fiercely in her face, all cold and unpitying. It was the icy rain soaking through her clothes that roused her to herself.

By a great effort she was able to collect her thoughts. Once more the sound of a clock striking recalled her to a sense of where she was and where she ought to be.

In her excitement she had not noticed which way she had come, and now found herself in that part of the town totally unknown to her, and with very little time before she ought to have been going through her performance in the ring.

Fearing she would be late, with the knowledge of the storm of wrath which would be poured upon her head by the manager, she turned, and once more set out upon her journey. Would this never end? Was she never to reach her destination? Truly it seemed so. Inquiry after inquiry she made as to the direction she should take, often in her haste and nervousness mistaking what was said to her, and having to retrace her steps. Up

and down the streets she hurried, a shadow in a world of shadows, until at last she saw the huge circus tent before her.

With a heart beating so loudly it seemed to deafen her, she made her way round to the hastily-erected shed, in which the bedraggled, dingy grub was to transform herself into the smiling, dancing little fairy.

Was she in time, she wondered? Her fears were soon proved to be well grounded, for her first performance on the Turk was, she knew, placed early in the first part of the programme, and as she hurried to the dressing-room the crowd which commenced to surge out of the tent, in the direction of the nearest public-house, told her that it was the interval. Sick at heart for what was to come, she pushed her way through the crowd to her destination.

It never occurred to her that perhaps it would have been better for her to have absented herself altogether till the morrow on a plea of illness, for the anger which she was sure to have provoked might have then somewhat cooled.

But this idea never entered Lizette's head, so dazed and confused was she by what had occurred during her endless walk ; added to this her clothes were soaking wet through—she had put down her umbrella in order that she might make more haste—while the dull, aching pain in her head had increased a thousandfold, making it impossible even for her to think.

In the dressing-room, she found Madame Terelli,

the dog-trainer, and Madame Fourteenstone. The former was too engrossed in her toilet to do much more than shrug her shoulders, and give forth a few disjointed sentences expressive of pity; but the latter, who had all along been only too willing to participate in the general crusade against one whom she considered her rival, favoured Lizette with glowing descriptions of the frame of mind in which the manager already was, the greeting she (Lizette) might expect, together with various hints, and scarcely veiled sneers about the past, and the way some people bore their troubles.

Lizette was used to such treatment, and received it as she always did, in utter silence, broken only by a sigh of weariness, which deepened into a convulsive shiver, as she exchanged her wet dress for the gay robes of the Fay of Fire. For Bonfire's performance came early in the second part of the programme.

As a rule she was a quick, neat dresser, but to-night nothing seemed to go right. Her cold fingers every now and then refused to do their office, and more than once she had to pause in her work and lean against the dressing-table for support.

She had grown used to the change in the face which now met her gaze in the small looking-glass, but to-night it struck her so strangely that she spent more time than usual in hiding the ill effects of her walk and agitation beneath such covering as art could lend her. This done, she drew her cloak round her and made her way into the ante-room.

Here she found Mr and Mrs Carl Hermann, as usual indulging in very lover-like behaviour, considering the time they had been married; Mr Petman, no doubt on the watch, and some of the grooms, amongst them Smith, who had spent most of his time during the performance in staring vacantly at any point at which Lizette might be expected to appear, being repeatedly called to order by his master, each time with increasing vigour and force.

The fancy-rider's appearance was greeted by a sudden cessation of all conversation: every one waited for what was to come next.

This they had not long to do; Mr Petman walked across to where his victim stood, and once again she was made to feel the weight of the rod which he had power to wield; as before she stood mute, for there was no one now to defend her.

The people were so used to such scenes that after the first few moments they returned to their various affairs, and only Smith paid any particular attention to the manager's parting shot, which was his informing Miss Hartzmann that in future her services would not be required—this with an air of malicious triumph which he imagined was dignified.

At this juncture Smith so far forgot himself as to groan aloud, to hide which expression of feeling he took to polishing up the Turk's harness with such vigour that he managed to damage it in some way.

Perhaps seeking by this a new channel to torment the little fancy-rider, Mr Petman turned from her to the groom, and in a voice of thunder informed him that the whole of his week's salary would be forfeited to pay for the repair, which, small as was the screw, was double the amount of what the cost would really be.

What the act of injustice meant to him, living as he did strictly from hand to mouth, seemed to perfectly paralyze the poor fellow. He stood looking at his master without daring to say a word, his own scarred countenance and dull grey eyes a striking contrast to the unusually, one might almost say dangerously, crimson one; but when that gentleman, perspiring visibly, and panting in a way which might have alarmed a close observer, at length moved away to find a new channel for his wrath, he (Smith) stole like a dog to Lizette's side, and there they stood like two culprits, instead of two unfortunates, the victims of a fate which seemed determined to go against them.

A few minutes later, however, the groom was summoned to his duty, namely, to attend the lady-rider's performance, and one by one the rest of the company dispersed, till Lizette found herself alone in the ante-room. She was sitting on a box in the farthest corner, leaning her head wearily against one of the supports of the tent, her eyes closed, the pain in her head increasing every moment with the long shivers which she could not control, when suddenly, before she was

aware any one had entered, a hand was laid on her arm, and a voice said in her ear, "Lizette!"

There was no need for her to pause and ask herself who it was spoke. It was a voice she would never forget. It was the voice of her false lover, uttering her name softly, as he had been wont to do long ago, and as starting up she opened her eyes, it was to meet Carl Hermann's grey eyes looking down into her own.

"Lizette," he said, in the low, pleading tone she knew so well—for how often it had whispered words into her ear which had set her heart beating with glad delight—speaking once again in the soft accents of the mother tongue, which had been the first tie to bind them together—"Lizette, may I speak to you? I have wanted to do so so long, but I have not dared. Let me tell you how it was; I will explain—I—are you ill, Lizette?"

For with a sudden cry the girl had staggered back against the side of the tent, covering her face with her hands. This was the first time since she had known of his marriage that so much as a word had passed between her and the ring-master. True, she could not avoid hearing his voice at all times while she was at the show, but never before had he willingly addressed her, least of all in the dear old language of the fatherland. What was his reason for doing so now I cannot say. Hitherto he had not deigned or dared to offer any explanation, even if he had had any to

offer, and it was hard to tell whether he spoke now from good or evil motives.

It might have been that he had had some slight disagreement with his handsome wife, and wished to show her that he was not always going to remain as hitherto he had done, tied to her apron-strings, and thinking that no doubt even a few crumbs from his hand would be welcomed by the little fancy-rider, he had been tempted to offer them.

Or it might have been, and perhaps it is more charitable to give him the benefit of the doubt—it might have been that a feeling of remorse had at length been roused within him for what he had done, together with a sense of pity for the unmistakable look of suffering on the girl's white face had prompted him to try and make some little reparation for the part he had played.

But Lizette did not wait to analyse motives, she only knew that it was his touch on her arm, his voice speaking to her, and calling her by her name, his face, which had smiled at her while his heart had been false—his face looking down into hers, perhaps glorying in the tale it told so plainly.

Only a moment she was held spell-bound, then as if she had been stung, she flung aside the hand which rested on her arm, and drew herself erect, with the warm blood scorching her cheeks and coursing in her veins like fire.

“*Nein, nein,*” she said, spreading out her hands before her; “come not near me; do not touch

me; go to—to your wife; do not touch or speak to me!”

And gathering her cloak round her as though there were contamination in his touch, she sprang by him, and out of the doorway, and on into the outside tent, where the grooms were busy with the horses, for on the morrow the show was to take its departure to a town some miles distant.

Controlling herself as best she could, Lizette stood quietly by, apparently watching them at their work, they glancing curiously at her from time to time, until, after expending far more energy than was usual over rubbing down the Signor's pet steed, Amazon, Birket blurted out something about being sorry for what had occurred, and now that some one had started, more regrets were loudly expressed that the little German girl should have received her *congé*, in stable language “got the sack.” Rather absently Lizette thanked them for their kindness, and a moment later followed Bonfire into the ring, and began her performance.

Nothing occurred to spoil this, for the ring-master, no doubt interpreting aright the rebuff he had received, kept in the background, at the door of the ante-room, talking to his wife and father-in-law.

It so happened, however, that when the fire-gates were brought, some little delay occurred, and the manager called loudly to the young German to look after the men; not daring to disobey, Carl hastily sprang into the ring and

• moved one of the hurdles into its proper position, then signed to one of the men to take his place to support it. The man either would not or did not see the motion, the band struck up, and Bonfire was making his preparatory tour of the ring. There was nothing for Carl to do but to remain where he was.

Twice round the circle and Lizette, who took the leaps standing, sprang to her feet on the horse's back. The flaming hurdles are pushed into their places, she kisses her hands on either side, in answer to the applause, gives that shrill little cry which is so well understood by all well-behaved circus horses, and to which Bonfire obediently responds. The first hurdle is taken in safety, Lizette sets the horse quickly at the remaining one. As she does so, she glances down for the first time, sees amidst the flames of the burning gate a face which is the one of all others she dare not look upon, she feels once again a shiver seize her from head to foot, and knows nothing more except that she is falling, falling down she knows not where.

In the circus tent there is screaming and a wild rush forward, both by people in the ring and those who are nearest it.

Many willing hands are stretched out to help, many horror-stricken faces peer down at a sickening sight, a few moments of wild confusion, then a limping, panting horse is led out of the ring, its gay trappings, glossy coat, and silky mane rough and torn and singed; behind it, quickly as they

dare, with white faces and trembling hands, the grooms pass out of sight with something, an indescribable motionless something, on a hurdle covered over with a banner, whose gay colours and spangles are stained with a dark crimson stain, which had not disfigured them a few moments before, when the fairy-like form of the Fay of Fire bounded so airily over them.

The men, gently as they are able, carry their strange burden, the like of which they had never borne into the ring, out from the crowd; the ante-room curtains close behind them, and then every one in the vast audience begins to ask how it happened, and to indulge in the wonder such an incident is sure to give rise to, some of the men wiping away the beads of perspiration from their foreheads, more than one woman clinging with fright to her protector.

It is not for long this confusion lasts, for the ante-room curtains part, and ruddier, if possible, than ever, and quite as smiling and self-possessed, Mr Charles Petman begs his audience to be in no way alarmed. The accident is by no means as serious as it appeared; the young lady is more shaken than hurt, is, in fact, well enough to return home, and a lot more assurances of the same nature, which the frightened people are only too glad to believe, never doubting that the manager is speaking the truth. The end of it all is that, save a few, perhaps, who do not place quite so much credence in the statement of the smiling manager, and who feel as if the fresh air

is preferable to the heat of the tent and the remembrance of what has so lately happened, everyone in the tent returns to his seat, the ring is once more reduced to order, the band strikes up, the men once more take their places, if with a trifle less laughing and joking than before—grave shakes of the head and hurried whispers instead—no one notices the fact, for all eyes are bent on the lady-rider who, erect and handsome in her velvet habit, displays to their admiring gaze the perfect control she has over her beautiful roan.

Thus the late accident was forgotten, at least for the time. Everything went on as before, save that in a corner of the stable crouched a figure who had escaped from the confusion like one demented, to hide away in the darkness, to cry and moan with terror; and later on in the evening a tall figure in a long light overcoat reeled out of a low tavern near where the show was, and walked with a slow, unsteady step down the dreary street. Once he paused and looked up into the window of a house in which a light was burning, as though some one kept watch.

"It wasn't my fault," he muttered half aloud, half to himself; "I couldn't help it. I feel it quite as much as she does; but Rosa's the best spec."

With that he sighed heavily and reeled on.

And in that room where the light was burning a weary soul tossed and turned in the wildness and heat of fever, with ever one cry on the dry

white lips, "Oh, why does not some one come to me? I am so lonely, so lonely."

But no answer came to the prayer. The only heart in all the world which beat faithfully in answer to the cry was many miles away, and did not know of all the pain and sadness which was gathering round his little "friend," to whom by-and-by he was to be so much.

CHAPTER XII.

A GLOW-WORM.

IT was about a month after the events recorded in the last chapter that Jerry was for the second time set free from his imprisonment. He had endured this last term with tolerable patience, only regretting one thing—that the while he was totally without news of his little German friend. He told himself he had been a fool not to find some excuse under cover of which from time to time he might have received news of how matters were going on with her in whom he was so much concerned. He could easily have been anxious, as was only natural, to have been kept aware of the whereabouts of the show, in case he should have wanted to join it at a moment's notice; but, as we know, it is not always those who have the best intentions who act the best, and because no doubt of his new resolutions by which he most effectually tied his own hands, the idea never entered his head, or, if it did, he put it aside as a course of proceeding beyond the pale of that on which he had determined.

For my part, I think, it would only have been in accordance with his new part of Lizette's brother that he should have adopted some method of evincing his lively interest.

As it was, he only gave another proof of the theory that excess of caution is quite as dangerous as over-daring.

At length, however, as I have said, the clown was once more free to return to his work, that was providing Mr Petman would condescend to receive him back into his old place. To an outsider this might have appeared doubtful, but Jerry knew that the manager would rather endure the not too pleasant fact of his presence than run the risk of losing money by any proceedings which Jerry might take against him, if he pleased, for a breach of contract, to say nothing of a nice little sum which he might have had to pay in his daughter's name for the inconvenience Daystar's little fit of temper had occasioned.

So Jerry reasoned, with how much justification one can hardly say, and hailed with delight the day which once more saw him at liberty to act as well as to think, not only for himself but for his newly-adopted sister.

He had learnt from Mr Petman that that gentleman had an engagement at the big market town of Middleton about three months after the end of that at the People's Gardens. Thither, therefore, Jerry directed his steps on the day already mentioned, after a prolonged leave-taking with his landlady.

It was one of those fair, fine days in winter when we are deluded into the belief that at length the spring has come, and Jerry, perhaps with the foolishness to which we are all prone at times, looked upon it as a good omen, and, in consequence, set off on his journey with a light heart, leaving Mrs Parkins far less elated than he was himself.

He reached Middleton somewhat late in the day, but that did not prevent him from at once seeking the usual abiding-place of the show.

Whistling gaily, although he repeatedly assured himself that there was no reason for him to feel extra joyful, he made his way down the crowded streets to where on inquiry he was informed "the circus folk had been for the last week, and a nice mess they were a-making of the green."

And sure enough, before he had gone very far he saw before him the tents and other paraphernalia appertaining to a show. I say advisedly *a* show, because while he was yet a hundred yards from the same, Jerry was suddenly endued with the idea that there was something strange about their appearance — strange — that is to say unfamiliar.

To his accustomed vision every car, waggon, and canvas of the Petman show was only too well known and, as I have said, those before him hardly corresponded with those he had imprinted on his mind's eye.

At first he thought that his long absence from among them had caused his memory to play him

tricks, or his imagination to paint them different to what they in reality were, but a nearer inspection convinced him that such was not the case.

His first impression was in fact a sound one—the show before him was undoubtedly not that for which he sought, for by the glare of many lamps, emblazoned forth in gilt letters on a scarlet ground, was the name of “Robert Wilford.”

Jerry read the two words over more than once to make sure that his eyes did not deceive him, knowing, as he did, that the name was that of the man whom Charles Petman usually looked upon with much indignation as his rival.

How came it, then, that he was here in that gentleman’s place, as to all appearances he undoubtedly was?

Jerry knew well enough that Mr Petman had long before entered into a contract for the occupation of the ground, and it was hardly likely that he would have been induced to forego his plans, since his last stopping at Middleton had been highly successful.

After staring somewhat blankly at the show for several minutes, and trying in vain to solve the enigma, it occurred to Jerry that the best thing he could do was to set about trying to find the key.

This he at once determined to do, and was soon making his way in the direction of the stables, where he busied himself with making cautious inquiries.

Every one, however, connected with the show—it being during the evening performance—was so busy that he could gain little or no information, excepting that only the week before the order had been given for the removal to Middleton, instead of starting, as had been originally intended, in the opposite direction.

To questions as to the reason for their being at liberty to do so, or indeed any information respecting the Petman show, he entirely failed to elicit any satisfactory answer.

It was strange certainly—very strange. Jerry was, as he phrased it, very much taken aback, and not a little concerned. As we know, he was by no means quick at unravelling mysteries, and this one certainly “fogged” him.

By what he called, however, a happy thought, he asked to see the manager, but was told that gentleman was not in attendance; the ring-master, next in command, was a fresh arrival; and so all hope of gaining any information in that quarter was vain. Jerry was fast feeling himself being reduced to the last stages of despair and impatience, when after much anxious inquiry he ascertained that only about a month before the Petman show had been heard of as being at Greyton, a busy town some miles nearer London. With this clue he was obliged to be content, and still turning over the troublesome riddle in his mind, he sought a lodging for the night, feeling not a little disappointment at the unexpected end to his plans for the day, which had begun so auspiciously. On the morrow, how-

ever, he had in a measure recovered his spirits by the aid of the very sage reflection that no doubt there was no mystery in the affair after all.

Very likely Mr Petman had allowed his claim to the ground at Middleton to be bought off by his rival; perhaps having a better "spec." in view, and believing "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," laid his plans accordingly.

Comforting himself with this assurance Jerry set off once more on his journey—this time to Greyton—where after some trouble he managed to ascertain from an ostler at one of the taverns that the show had been in the town; he (the ostler) remembered it quite well, because his good woman had been to see it and came home quite upset because there had been an accident of some sort during the evening.

At the word "accident" Jerry started violently, and asked three or four questions without waiting for any answers. When, however, he did give the old ostler time to speak, his reply completely reassured him—not knowing that the shilling he eagerly held out as payment for the information made his informant so anxious to be obliging that he drew somewhat on his imagination.

"It worn't much, if I remember rightly," he said, bestowing the bribe with much care in his breeches pocket. "They said as no one was hurt—only a young chap—two or three of 'em brought him in here a bit later on. He seemed quite to have had all the sense knocked out of him; was trembling like a leaf, and not even a pint of our half-and-half 'd fetch him round."

This mention of his favourite compound recalled the man of horses to the fact that he had now the wherewithal to indulge in his partiality, so muttering something about "the master wanting him," he disappeared into the house before Jerry could ask any more questions.

The young clown's mind, however, was completely set at rest by this suggestion: that it was one of the male performers who had been concerned in the accident, not recognising Smith by the ostler's description, and therefore seeing nothing to cause him any alarm in the affair.

"It's Patchouli, of course; I always said he'd get a fit of the shakes one day, and he'd dismount sooner than he mounted. I hope he didn't hurt himself; but there, the man said he came in here, so I suppose it's all right. I should be sorry to see Apollo come to grief; he was very kind to my little sister."

The thought of Lizette by this name caused Jerry to put the ostler's words completely from his mind, to give place to other ideas by which he was trying to bury the past beneath the future.

In a few moments, however, he roused himself to the fact of the present, and once more pursued his inquiries relative to the show.

After a little trouble he was fortunate enough to light upon the information that the show had, on leaving the town, set off in the direction of a neighbouring town—a journey by rail of about an hour, which Jerry determined to take on the morrow, knowing that as it was, of course, some

time since the show's visit he was sure to have to waste much time in making inquiries—in fact he saw soon that he had the same task to perform that he had often done before—namely, that of finding the trail of the show he wished to join—no easy piece of work—and following it up.

At any other time he would not so much have minded the delay, but now, as he told himself, although there was no reason for him to save as carefully as he had done lately, his illness had made rather a hole in his little store, which he had meant for such a different purpose, and he felt he would like to make up for lost time; above all did he feel that he should never be perfectly easy in his own mind till he was assured of his little sister's well-being, so far as he could be able to be so.

For this latter reason, then, particularly he set about his task with more than his usual vigour, and early on the morrow he was hurrying away with all speed from Greyton. Ah, had he only known as, in the dim light of the morning, he determined to make good head during the day—had he only known as he passed out of his cheap lodging on his way to the station, that in a dreary house in one of the deserted streets down which he walked with such steady tread that told of a fixed purpose, a weary fevered soul was tossing to and fro in the terrible unrest of pain; for ever uttering one cry, "I am so lonely—no one seems to care now—oh, it is terrible to be lonely."

But this despairing cry could no more reach Jerry's ears through the thick walls than when he

had been many miles away, and all unknowing how cruel fate was—bent on trying his patience by driving him hither and thither—actually away from the very object he sought—he went on his way with a heart full of hope and without one thought of any future trouble in his heart.

This latter was not strange, since to him, as to many of us who think in some great sorrow that we have fathomed all earthly bitterness, it seemed that the darkest hour had come, the dawn could not be very far off.

But how little do any of us know when the midnight hour is to be reached. Perhaps it is better for us that we should not, or else how many of us would sink under our burdens, knowing there is yet another load to be added.

Thus it was that Jerry set out once more on his journey, with a heart as light as it could be now that he had planned out his own life, which plan, because it had no mighty schemes for his future elevation, but merely that calm, unselfish resolve to accept quietly the denial of what he most coveted, and to henceforth take the lowlier office of brother to the only girl whom he had ever loved—because it was only a determination to do what seemed to him his duty—one would hardly have imagined could have needed any correction.

But then, who can ever account for the freaks of fate—at least, while we are suffering from the sting of some disappointed hope—although if, when the trial is over, a few of us turned and compared the two ways—the one we had made for ourselves, and

the one fate had chosen for us—how often should we find which had the surest foundation.

Speaking literally, our hero had to tramp many roads, running in all sorts of directions, before he gained the object for which he sought.

Experience had taught him the quickest way to follow up a trail when once upon it, and in this case his movements were hastened rather than otherwise, because of his double anxiety to be back at his work.

Thus it happened that on the second day after he had left Greyton many miles behind him, he seemed at last to have reached the end of his journey.

It was early one morning when he entered the town of Stoketon, having heard on the day previous that it was thither the Petman show had been known to have taken its flight only three weeks before, which fact made Jerry feel that at last he was near the object of his search.

This hope was rendered even more strong when on quitting the railway station he saw not far distant the well-known cars and other paraphernalia of the show.

With an alacrity which startled several of his fellow-passengers he made with great speed for the said point of attraction. When, however, he came as near to the said cars, etc., as iron bars would permit, he stopped as suddenly short, as equally disconcerting the passers-by, standing stock-still on the pathway, staring blankly before him. What he saw was not, after all, very startling, at

least, one would not have imagined so—merely a large building which had evidently once been a factory, brewery, or warehouse, but was now deserted, in the large yard of which, piled up and half hidden under ragged covers, was the paraphernalia already spoken of, encircled by a high brick wall, and barred from the intruder by a huge iron gate.

A casual observer, on noting the expression which came over the young clown's face as he viewed the yard from where he stood, might have imagined that on so close an inspection of the wonders of the show so dear to every country mind, he was filled with awe at what he saw. Such was not, as we know, the case. On the contrary, it was Jerry's familiarity with "the wonders" that roused in him the amazement.

With a quick eye he noted that the roadway into the yard was smooth and even—certainly unmarked lately by heavy cart wheels—that the thick coating of mud on the said wheels of the cars within was hard and dry—that the coverings over the same lay flat and clinging as though they had not been disturbed for some time; while, far from there being in the yard any of the usual hurry and bustle which Jerry had never before known to be absent from the precincts of the show, no sign of life animated the yard, the large gilded cars, tents, boardings, poles, piles of benches, and other requisites were entirely alone in their glory, bolted and barred in in solitary confinement.

What did it all mean?

The question fairly took Jerry's breath away, while one conclusion forced its way into his mind—namely, that for some unexplained reason the journeyings of the show had been brought to an abrupt conclusion. At any rate, there could be no doubt that it was some time since it had taken up its present station, as was proved by the signs Jerry's quick eye had noted, and by the fact that it had left the neighbouring town fully three weeks before.

What had happened?

Though quick enough to determine that, whatever it was, it was something of importance to have led to such a pass, Jerry did not so soon find a key to the riddle so unexpectedly put to him.

This, then, was the reason for the Wilford show being in possession at Middleton.

After staring vacantly into the yard for some moments, Jerry was roused by some irate passenger pushing roughly against him to take a nearer view of the same.

His inspection, as might have been expected, confirmed rather than disarmed his suspicion, and certainly gave him no clue to reading them aright.

Thoroughly "taken aback" once more, Jerry retired very slowly and thoughtfully to the nearest place of refreshment, where he endeavoured to collect his thoughts over half-a-pint of porter.

This done, he determined that the only thing to do was to recommence his inquiries, which business he at once set about, assured that he would not be long in obtaining information this time, since the

presence of the show in the yard was sure to have given rise to comment.

Thinking it best to go at once to the point, he entered a small cobbler's shop exactly opposite the disused brewery, or whatever it was.

Here he found an old man seated in the midst of a pile of well-worn boots and shoes, one of which he was mending with as much energy as weak eyes and trembling hands would allow.

This queer specimen of humanity Jerry, without wasting much time on preliminaries, proceeded to question, and in a few moments had elicited the following facts.

As he had conjectured, it was three weeks since the show had, amidst much excitement, taken up its abode in the yard. Its arrival had been superintended by several grooms, who used an extraordinary amount of bad language, and a young fellow, who, if his language was less forcibly expressed, nevertheless made some impression by the way he gave his orders.

From the description, Jerry had little difficulty in recognising Carl Hermann, and was furthermore convinced that something had happened to the manager, which surmise proved correct.

In a roundabout way it was ascertained by means of some remarks let fall by one of the hard-swearing grooms, that at the last stopping-place Mr Petman had been suddenly taken so dangerously ill that all business had had to be stopped, the show huddled away in the nearest available space, and the company dispersed.

Although, as is always the case, even when our anger has been just, Jerry did not quite like the recollection that the last time he had stood before the manager it had been with no gentle feeling in his heart, the former part of the cobbler's information did not fix his attention half so much as the latter.

The company was dispersed, gone, he knew not where, and Lizette of course amongst the rest.

It was truly enough to have disheartened the bravest soul, just when he imagined the end of his journey near, to find he had yet farther to travel, and this time without any clue at all.

In the fulness of his heart Jerry thanked the chatty old cobbler for his kindness, besides giving a more substantial proof of his gratitude by buying up the old man's entire stock of boot laces, perhaps with the dismal foreboding that he should need them in his coming journeying.

This action, while gladdening the old man's heart by the fact of his having, by the young clown's generosity, done more trade in one day than for many years he had done in a week, I am bound to say did not completely assure him of his customer's sanity, but it was eventually put down to the reputed eccentricity of "circus folk."

Meanwhile our hero started once more on his search, this time with quite as much, if not more earnestness, if less hope, because he was full of misgivings as to how his little sister had fared since the breaking up of the show.

He did not, however, allow himself to waste much time in idle fretting.

“If only I find her, or know that she’s well and as happy as she can be after what’s happened, that’s all I care. I’m not going to bother her by hanging round, for I know she doesn’t want me.”

CHAPTER XIII.

A LONG SEARCH.

I AM not going to attempt to give any description of this second search. Jerry was no skilled detective, and his blunders and silly mistakes were so many that they would hardly be amusing.

His will was better than his deeds; but does any one of my readers know what it is to be vainly seeking a clue in the dark? This for six long weeks was our hero's work, and but for the end he had in view and the bravery of his honest trusting heart, he must surely have given up many times.

I do not pretend to say that anything half so romantic as a presentiment of evil urged him to action, he only knew that in spite of all his resolutions to bear his lot patiently, this was a way in which he had no choice but to act, and act he did, but, alas! with very little result.

Like a modern edition of the Wandering Jew, he passed from town to town where he heard news of any show at which Lizette might have sought employment, but always without any result. No

such person had so much as presented herself to any manager during the time Jerry named.

It seemed truly as if she had vanished as completely off the face of the earth as though she had indeed been the butterfly to which her existence was likened.

Early in his search Jerry had decided to apply to Mr Petman, by means of an agent in London; but all the reply he received to his letter was that the manager was still too ill to have anything to do with business, and the whereabouts of any of his late company were unknown.

Two or three times our hero came very near despairing, but was always saved by his determination not to give up. He knew only too well that the little German girl had not a friend in the world besides himself. What, then, did it matter if he wasted his time and savings in seeking her? If his trouble was unnecessary, and she had meanwhile fallen amongst some good Samaritans, so much the better. It was after a more than usually severe fit of depression that Jerry became possessed of a sudden idea—namely, since he could not discover a new trail to see if he could find out anything from the old one.

With this idea he went over the ground which the show had travelled in its last journey, picking up what scraps of information he could, until in due course he once more reached Greyton.

Here he spent a long, disappointing day, and later in the evening, sick at heart, he determined to take the first train to London, and see whether

fate would be more kind than circumstance. The crowded city is a far more likely place of meeting than one would imagine. Jerry, too, remembered that George Epsom had declared his intention of trying his luck in London as soon as his time was up with Mr Petman, and it was very likely he might, through Madame Petite, be able to give some clue.

Delighted with this idea, vague as its foundation may seem to any one who has not known what it is to live on hope for many days, Jerry lost no time in starting at once on his journey; but, to his great vexation, his intention carried him no farther than the railway station, which he only reached in time to see the last train to London that day slowly, but none the less surely, vanishing in the distance.

Again this is an example of our inconsistency in deciding to abandon ourselves to the rule of fate and yet rebelling at the first move which is contrary to our own wishes.

Jerry's action in the matter was to indulge in not a little ill-temper, to which he certainly considered he had a right; in fact, he gave himself up entirely to a feeling of general annoyance.

Thinking, under the circumstances, that he was not an agreeable companion for any man, he determined to walk off his fit of the blues, and straightway proceeded to put his resolution into full force by striking out into the main road, along which he determined to tramp until he felt better, and then to turn his face homewards.

After walking for about two hours without his frame of mind very much altering, he had almost decided to give up the attempt, when his attention was attracted by the sound of music somewhere ahead.

A natural curiosity, and perhaps instinct, led him to ascertain whence it came, and he was by no means surprised when he found it to be from a show situated on a green round a bend in the road.

At first, such was his mood, he was half-a-mind to pass the familiar sights and sounds, these for once being anything but welcome to him. Even love of his work had been forgotten in the heat of his search; but after a moment, actuated by the impulse which urged him to leave no stone unturned in his search, he strolled leisurely through the crowd which was gathered round the entrance, attracted behind rather than before the scenes.

In a few minutes he found himself in what was known as the stables, where, as usual, he pursued his inquiries concerning the little fancy-rider, and as usual without success.

Jerry was by this time used to this result, but on the day in question the failure was by no means softened by the want of courtesy with which he met. Perhaps he was not himself so much inclined to be so cheery and jovial as usual, but certain it was that the groom whom he elected to question replied in anything but an agreeable manner; indeed, Jerry came near

to being ordered off the premises in a very peremptory manner.

"What do you want a-hanging round here? This ain't no place for loafers. If you want to see the show, why don't you pay yer money like a man and go in front? There isn't nothing to be made here, so don't think it. And as for the girl as you're after, you take my advice; she" (with an ugly leer) "can do without you, you bet. She's got another feller by this time, and won't thank you for interfering."

Before Jerry could make any reply, such as the hot blood which burnt in his honest cheek dictated, the insolent fellow was called away to perform some duty in the tent.

Still Jerry lingered, wondering whether it would be advisable to loosen the tongues of the remaining grooms by means of "drinks round." He was still debating this question in his mind when the fellow whom he had previously questioned reappeared from the tent holding his right hand carefully, and considerably paler in visage than he had been a few minutes before.

"I've been and done it," he said, grinning convulsively, and staring fixedly at his hand; "I've done it this time."

It turned out, on further inquiry, that what he had been and done was to skilfully insert his fingers beneath the machinery by means of which some scrap of an Italian woman flew through the air, which machinery had successfully crushed his fingers in a nasty, if not a severe manner—if ever the operation can be otherwise performed.

Every one was very ready with offers of help; but it so happened that just at that moment an order came for all hands to remove the same apparatus, and so the groom was told to wait a bit—an order very easy to give but not so easy to obey.

So the owner of the crushed fingers seemed to find it. He walked up and down, hugging the same to him, with many grimaces, until Jerry was induced to offer his assistance.

This was at first refused; but, after a bit, the hand was somewhat sulkily held out, and Jerry was allowed to bind up the bruised stumps as well as he was able.

This done, by the aid of a bucket and some rags for bandages, he (Jerry) gave some parting advice concerning future treatment, and was about to turn away, in obedience to the advice he had himself received, when he was detained by the touch of the hand which he had just doctored.

“Look here, guv’nor,” said the owner of the same, in a very gruff voice, according, however, to Jerry, a title of superiority which told more than his words,—“look here, guv’nor, you ain’t half a bad sort—anyhow, not what I took you for. I ain’t one to eat my words as a rule; but,” excusingly, “when a man’s up to his eyes in work and worries, with two of the hands down with fever, and no one to take their places, it ain’t to be expected that he’ll find time to be strictly polite and soft-tongued to every one as comes a-hanging round and asking questions. Anyhow, you’ve done a job for me. It’s only fair I should see if I can help

you. What is it you're after, eh? A girl, isn't it—some relation of yours, sister or cousin, no doubt?"—this with a view of atoning for his late insinuations—"you want to find her? Do I know anything? Let's see her name. What! Hatsman—Cartsman—"

Here Jerry supplied the correction, and gave a few particulars. The groom, however, only scratched his head with his uninjured hand and shook that member slowly.

He'd heard of the split-up in the Petman concern. About time—the old man had had his day; it was time he made room for others. But concerning those who had lately formed his company, he (the groom) could say nothing.

Jerry listened to the man's expressions of sympathy, rough as they were, very quietly, and was once more turning away when his attention was attracted to a horse which was being led into the stable to be relieved of its gorgeous trappings. These consisted of the usual pad, covered by a violet velvet curtain, elaborately worked in gold.

A casual observer might have been attracted to it by the fact that it had once been a very splendid affair, and even now had not quite lost all its beauty; but to Jerry it had attraction of another kind.

At first sight it seemed familiar to him. He stepped quickly forward, calling excitedly to the groom to bring the horse to a standstill, and then stood holding the velvet cover by one hand, and staring vacantly at it.

He recovered himself in a minute, and asked quickly to whom the cover belonged.

The answer was, "To Madame Zola, the greatest equestrian female juggler in the world."

This attribute of the lady completely refuted a suggestion that had risen in Jerry's mind, that perhaps Madame Zola was Lizette under another name; but there was still the all-important question to be answered: how then came the cloth out of the owner's possession?

"Look here," said Jerry, turning to the owner of the crushed fingers, "if you want to do me a real service, you'll let me have a word with this Madame what's-her-name!"

This request, slight as it seemed, was not so readily granted as one would have supposed; and, after a little, the cause of the deliberation came out in the fact that Madame Zola was the wife of Monsieur Zola.

At first Jerry was at a loss to see how her having a husband could affect his wishing to have a few words with the lady; but matters were soon further explained by some significant gestures with the arm and various nods and winks, by which he was to understand that the said gentleman was the personification of tyranny, and would be likely to resent in a forcible manner any interference between himself and spouse. No one would risk delivering Jerry's message, in which he declared that he would state his errand to Madame in the presence of the dreaded Monsieur, until, touched perhaps by Jerry's earnestness, the owner of the damaged fingers volun-

teered to do the job, and, loudly applauded by his brethren, he forthwith departed.

After a little time—which seemed to Jerry an hour—he returned, hardly as calm as he went; declared he would rather have his whole hand ground to powder than go through the ordeal of facing Monsieur again, but announced triumphantly that our hero could see Madame. Without any more delay Jerry was, therefore, conducted to the ante-room, where he found a big, but very mild-looking woman with a very nervous air, mounted guard over by a ferocious little Frenchman, a state of affairs which reminded one for all the world of a fiery little bull-dog bearding a very moth-eaten St Bernard.

Whatever on earth had induced him to conceive so much as a thought of jealousy concerning his wife, who seemed, indeed—at least in private life—the last person in the world to take the fancy of a second man, remains for ever a companion riddle to that of the immortal Sphinx.

The air with which he watched our hero's entry was truly comical; all the more so because of the complete indifference of Madame, who had disposed of her large figure as far away in the corner of the tent as possible, and because of the excited earnestness of Jerry.

The latter was completely oblivious of any suspicions his visit might have excited, and went straight to the point—this by a question, Where had Madame got the violet velvet cover from which she possessed?

Before Madame was allowed to give any reply, *Monsieur son mari* required to be satisfied as to the reason of its being asked, which explanation was somewhat trying to all concerned, since neither Jerry nor the fiery little Frenchman understood a word of each other's mother-tongue ; and Madame's acting interpreter was the cause of much suspicion on the part of her jailer, who persisted in believing that the whole affair was got up to secure for his wife an interview with a former lover—Jerry.

After emphatically denying this assertion, Jerry gave up the attempt in despair, and regardless of consequences, devoted all his attention to the lady. At first some suspicion seems to have been aroused as to whether the said pad curtain, which had only been lately purchased, was stolen property ; but at length Jerry was informed that the said article had been procured in Greyton, no later than the previous day.

"Of whom?" was the next important question.

Of a friend of the landlady of the house where Madame lodged.

Did Madame know how that friend had come into possession of it?

Yes, through a lodger of hers.

Did Madame know anything about the lodger?

Nothing at all. Monsieur had, in fact, had the arranging of the affair ; but that gentleman, by means of his passion, had managed to render himself totally unintelligible, and the way he gesticulated and gnashed his teeth so violently, without any other result, warned Jerry once more to draw

his inquiries to a head with the question—would either Madame or Monsieur give him the address of their landlady?

Here, however, arose another dilemma. Monsieur looked upon the inquiry as a trick for Madame's daring lover to gain knowledge of her residence, and, more passionately than ever, he refused to supply the information himself or to allow his wife to do so.

Jerry was in despair, but made one last effort. Since the landlady's address was to be denied him, would that of her friend be granted him, he swearing on his oath, by everything Monsieur chose, that he had no thoughts of ever seeing Madame again. Even this, however, would not appease the fiery little Frenchman, and Jerry was fain to retire with success in his mission denied him because of such a silly fancy, to wait until the morning, when there might be a hope of Monsieur being a little cooler and more reasonable—meanwhile he must have patience; but when one has been waiting for so many weary hours, the last minute which divides us from our object is doubly full of suspense, because of its comparison in length.

So Jerry found it, and the mystery of the velvet cover made it none the less so.

In no pleasant frame of mind—certainly not wishing Monsieur Zola a good-night—Jerry turned out into the crowd. He had not, however, gone very far before there was a hand laid on his arm, a paper was thrust into his grasp, and before he had time to say a word, Madame's tall figure had retreated from his side.

Guessing its contents, Jerry unrolled the paper and read the following address : Mrs Spicer, Wicker's Row, near Cross Street. Fate had, indeed, been very kind, for now at last Jerry believed he held in his hand the clue for which he had so long sought.

During the foregoing interview, the Frenchman having expressed some fear lest the velvet cover which he now looked upon with vindictive hatred should lead to further trouble by being proved to be "stolen goods" as Jerry was half tempted to believe, had readily assented to the clown's proposition to buy it back, taking care, however, to pocket a trifle by the transaction.

Thus, with his two precious possessions—the velvet cover and the paper—Jerry set his face toward the town, with the determination to make uncertainty sure before he was many hours older.

His return tramp to Greyton, however, took him somewhat longer than he anticipated, and it was fully half-past ten o'clock before he was fairly inside the city.

At that time of night he could not very well pay the visit he intended, supposing Lizette lodged with the Mrs Spicer whose address he had so fortunately obtained, as he in his new accession of hope thought possible, though he was quite at a loss for her motive in selling the velvet cover, no suspicion of evil entering his mind, knowing as he did that only a little while before Lizette had told him of the nice little store she had laid by for "a day when it rained ;" but all the same, so eager was he to make sure one way or the other, either that he was on

the right or wrong scent, that he plodded on tired as he was to where he was told he would find Cross Street, and then after a little trouble, owing to an absence of reliable guides, at length found himself in Wicker's Row, a dingy thoroughfare enough, where most of the houses were wrapt in sullen darkness, save one in which every window on the lower floor was a blaze of light with loud sounds of noise and bustle, the rest of the house being in shadow save where a dim flickering light gleamed fitfully in one of the high upper windows. After vainly seeking for any clue by which he might distinguish Mrs Spicer's abode from the rest—a hopeless task since no number was given him as a guide,—Jerry decided to apply for information where it seemed most likely he would obtain it, namely, at the house with the lights. As he stood before the door, the sounds of many voices, laughter, the tramp of many feet, and the din of loud music was nearly deafening, and he had to knock more than once before he was heard.

After, however, the third application of the knocker, the door was snatched open suddenly by a servant girl, tall and stolid in appearance, and, of course, looking as though she had just stepped out of the coal hole, a peculiarity of lodging-house servants.

Of her Jerry inquired in his most polite tones as to the whereabouts of Mrs Spicer's lodging house in the Row.

“Where's Mrs Spicer's?” returned the girl, with an attempt at a smile on her expansive, fat, sallow,

and very besmeared countenance. "Well, it ain't far off—leastways, you're there now."

"Oh, this is the house; then can you tell me if I shall find a Miss Hartzmann here?"

"Lor', if you want any one why don't yer come in, and not keep a body on the doorstep a-catching one's death of cold, and missus a-calling and a-shouting all over the place fit to deafen one." It was plain the girl was not possessed of the best of tempers, and her annoyance visibly increased as she went on. "What's the use of you a-asking me for any Miss, or Mrs for that matter? How am I expected to know who's not and who is in the house at this blessed minute? I ain't got a memory like a hoss," the illustration was hardly apt, but no matter, "let alone knowing people's names without asking 'em; and if I'm to set to work and ask every man jack as has set his foot inside this door what his name is, I'd have my work set. Not but what that's done already; I'm well-nigh run off my legs. I always told missus how it'd be when she let the second floor go get married on our six weeks' washing-day."

Thus grumbling in a half-fierce, half-sulky tone, emphasising each sentence by the flourish of a pair of red arms, terminating in a pair of equally red and dirty hands, totally regardless of the many attempts which Jerry made to turn the current of her indignation, it is impossible to say how long the ill-used "slavey" might have rattled on, had not our hero applied the same key to close her lips as he had often used to open those of others.

Squeezing a shilling—even then the news that he

wished for was cheap at the price—into the girl's hand, he said quietly but determinedly,—

“Look here, my good girl, I'm very sorry if your mistress has been imposing on your powers of endurance, and I haven't the slightest wish to take up your time, if only you'll give me a plain answer to a plain question.”

“What is it?” said the girl, her loud-voiced anger subdued into a not more prepossessing sullenness. “Look sharp, they're a-going into supper directly, and if the onion sauce is burnt as I've left on the stove there'll be the devil to pay. Look sharp, can't you,” for afraid suddenly lest the answer he waited for should be in the negative, a blow to his hopes which just then he did not feel equal to, Jerry hesitated.

Thus admonished, however, he asked somewhat timidly,—

“Have you a lodger by the name of Hartzmann”—(very distinctly)—“living here—Miss Hartzman?”

On the first utterance of the name a look of intelligence as surprising as it was sudden spread over the stolid slavey's big, dirty face.

“‘Hartzmann?’ I always calls it ‘Atsman’; I never could get hold of these here foreign names by the right end.”

“Then she is here?” asked Jerry eagerly, in spite of all his sober resolutions, his brotherly heart giving a big jump.

“Here? Yes; she's here right enough. Had our top floor front these weeks gone. You want to see her?”

"Well, no ; not to-night ; unless she is anywhere handy," said Jerry, half hoping such would be the case, but deterred from being too pressing lest he should be ushered into the midst of the gay wedding-party just as he was—a not too festive-looking individual—without a word to say to Lizette as to the reason of his sudden appearance before her—"not unless she's anywhere handy."

"Lor', she ain't that—'tain't time, yer know. She ain't come down yet ; but I'm a-hoping she soon will—it's mighty lonely for her up there."

As she spoke the look of intelligence on the girl's face faded into another expression, which Jerry could not quite make out. He was debating in his own mind whether to go in or not, when suddenly a harsh voice called from somewhere in the hall, "Sarah ! Sarah ! where are you ? Come here at once. Tiresome girl you are, never anywhere when you're wanted. Sarah !"—with increasing violence—"Sarah !"

"Well, you ain't coming in, I suppose," said the girl to Jerry, glancing round somewhat apprehensively in the direction of the voice.

"No," said Jerry, for her sake making up his mind quickly. "I'll come to-morrow—it'll do then."

"Don't be too early, for she's sure not to be up till late. To-night's sure to upset her ; but I'll tell her you'll be round."

"Sarah !—Sarah !" came the shrill voice shriller than ever.

"All right, I'm coming," snapped the owner of

that name in a very different tone to that in which she replied to Jerry ; and without giving her questioner time to say a word more, she closed the door as abruptly as she had opened it, and stolid and sullen as usual returned to the duty against which she had so fruitlessly protested as following a six weeks' wash—namely, the serving up of a tripe supper to the wedding guests of the second floor.

But even amidst all the hurry and confusion which attended the sumptuous banquet she contrived to find time to mount the many creaking wooden stairs which led to the top front attic, carrying with her as daintily set out as she knew how a tiny morsel stolen from the many good things provided for the feast, a small piece of tripe hidden under a floating mass of onions and watery sauce, a piece of bread, which in her efforts to toast she had rendered black as coal on one side, the other being a sickly grey (to say nothing of the damage to her fingers and the sharp words she had had to endure during the toasting performance), the whole disposed on a battered tray, the dents in which caused the plate, a severely chipped one, to bound up dangerously high into the air more than once during her ascent, the same covered with a *serviette* far from clean, held in its place by a monstrous glass salt-cellar and a leaden-looking pepper castor, which by the time the end of the journey was reached had emptied more than half its contents in little heaps round the edge of the plate, a process which was hardly likely to afford the diner therefrom any great pleasure.

Undeterred by these reflections—indeed I think not a little pleased with her own handiwork—Sarah tapped as gently as her bungling fingers would allow at a door on the top landing (a courtesy one does not always observe in lodging-house servants, especially when one's limited means make it compulsory for one's apartment to be somewhat nearer the sky than is agreeable to those with whom "stairs" are a consideration), waited a few moments, then pushing open the door gently with her knee (another practice much favoured by the tribe), entered softly.

As already it has been decreed that it was too late an hour for visitors, we, like Jerry, must be content to wait until the morning to pay our visit where we would wish; but even from the landing we hear Sarah's gruff voice asking questions in a subdued tone, to which the answers are so low they do not reach us.

Only once are the voices raised, but they sink suddenly, and after a little, as though she were loath to go, Sarah comes out of the room again and goes with her usual heavy tread down the stairs, muttering to herself as she goes, "I suppose it was all right what I told her. He was tallish a bit, and might have been handsome if I could have seen his face. He had not got on a long coat; but as to his being a foreigner, how's it to be expected that me as 'ave never been taught how to speak my own language proper, should know whether other folks do or no. Anyhow, what I told her seemed to wake her up a bit, so there can't be no harm done."

And with this conclusion Sarah returned through the realms of lights, dancing, laughing, talking, feasting, and all the other appertainments of merry-making to her certainly quieter, but hardly more orderly region of pots and pans, and was soon up to her elbows in the weighty, and certainly greasy, business of washing up.

Meanwhile in the big city two souls in the silence of the night lay and dreamt of what the next day should bring forth: one in that room above where the light flickered tried in vain to single from each other in the close web which was daily drawing round her, the three sisters, Past, Present, and Future; the other, a brave, honest heart, worn out with a long day's work and excitement, slept the deep sleep of one who has earned his rest, smiling now and then to himself as, in his dreams, he was no longer without, but within that well-lighted house in Wicker's Row, sitting at the head of a long table of guests, among whom were the man with the bandaged fingers, Monsieur and Madame Zola, the one more fiery, the other more washed-out and uninteresting than ever, Mrs Parkins, poor Smith, the Breaknecks, the old cobbler, the Signor, Sarah, and a host of others, all attired in appropriate costumes—Apollo's gorgeous garments side by side with Sarah's soiled, torn cotton gown, the voluminous folds of Mrs Parkins's black silk half hiding poor Smith's shabby outfit (the good lady, I may say, wore the Dutch clock for a brooch, which strangely enough did not look at all out of place on her expansive

bosom), all the rest in their show dresses, and the cobbler in his leathern apron and brass-rimmed spectacles, nothing strange about his appearance save that his hair, what little he had, consisted of dozens of boot laces. But Jerry did not worry himself about trifles ; what did it matter to him if every dish on the table was a conjuring trick, or rather the materials for such, with rules and directions attached, or that instead of knives and forks there were whips, curry combs, and other appliances of the ring and stable ? he only knew that he was seated, dressed in the most gorgeous clown's garb ever made or invented by mortal, at the head of all the company, by his side a figure which it did not need the dress of the Fay of Fire to recognise, a figure whose face was hidden under a velvet curtain worked with gold.

This screen between him and the face he so longed to see was the only bar to Jerry's complete happiness, and by-and-by moved in his dream by an impulse, he bent forward to raise it. But ere his hand could do its office, just in fact as he was about to raise the thick veil, a sudden sound of water rushing sounded in his ears, the lights all went out, he struggled violently and awoke to find it all a dream.

And not only that, he woke also to the fact that it was morning at last, the morning of the day on which he was to see his little sister Lizette once more, the dawn of another day indeed.

CHAPTER XIV.

“CAN IT BE YOU?”

WHEN next we see our hero it is somewhat later in the day, when he is just finishing his toilet in the dingy little room he had engaged for the night, for eager as he was on the night before to pay his visit to Lizette, it is now past three o'clock and he has not yet even started.

To tell the truth, when first awakening to the fact that it was morning, his impulse had been to get up at once and put his intention into action: but on second thought, recalling Sarah's words relative to the effect the gaiety of the night before might have upon the household, the little fancy-rider included, he determined to indulge his weary body, which still bore the effects of his long tramp of the day before, in a second nap.

This nap was prolonged to such an extent that to his dismay when he awoke it was near mid-day.

Full of remorse he jumped out of bed, hastily dressed, and would have made off there and then but for the appearance of his landlady with his

breakfast, which she declared she would not keep hot any longer.

So aggrieved was this lady when she was told to keep the victuals and charge double in the bill for them if she liked, that to save a scene, and obeying also the dictates of his inner man, Jerry sat down and calmly and with a relish demolished the whole of the meal provided.

This done he found himself of a different frame of mind to what he had been before. It so happened that in his room was a mirror, which hung on the wall, in which he when rising from his breakfast caught a glimpse of himself.

Having done so he was suddenly endued with the idea that he was hardly fitly habited for paying a visit even to his sister.

For knocking about he had donned his oldest suits, which by process had certainly not been improved, in fact, in his eyes, he appeared very shabby, nay, well nigh disreputable, and he at once decided that he could not present himself before Lizette in such a guise.

Actuated by an impulse for which he could not afterwards account, he set off for the railway station, at which it was his habit to leave the shabby portmanteau containing all his worldly belongings.

This receptacle he transported to his lodgings, and, producing from its well-stuffed interior various articles of wearing apparel, prepared to array himself in them according to his ideas on the dignity and solemnity of the occasion.

This operation took some time, so elaborate was

it; but at length we behold him equipped at last to his satisfaction standing coolly surveying his reflection in the mirror already mentioned.

This was a huge old-fashioned affair which no doubt in its time had been of considerable value and not a little splendour, but now nearly all the gilding had either been worn or knocked off its frame, leaving only a battered skeleton, in between the veins of which its once unbroken surface was divided into numerous little mirrors by so many cracks as there are lines of latitude and longitude on a map, with a few rivers and boundary lines thrown in; while owing to the glass having early in its career slipped from the frame a little, the surface looked exactly as if it had been struck by lightning.

In this reflector, which presented him chopped up into little bits of about four inches square, like so many sandwiches, Jerry strove to ascertain whether his appearance was satisfactory.

I can't say whether he had reason for the complacency with which he conducted his review. Let my reader judge for himself.

The figure which the mirror reflected was that of a young man of about two-and-twenty years of age, well built except for the fact of his being rather short than otherwise, dressed in a comfortable but hardly elegant-looking suit of a texture not remarkable for being very fine, while the agreement of hues contained in it was certainly a matter of taste.

Although his tastes were by no means æsthetic,

Jerry had a strong liking for shades of grey-brown, and various boiled-looking colours which lie between, and usually composed his costume of the same. His suit for the festive occasion of which I write consisted of trousers of a grey cloth, speckled with yellow and brown, the mixture known, I believe, by the name of pepper and salt; waistcoat of brown, grey, and crimson checks, recommended by a provincial tailor as being of a cheerful pattern for winter; a coat of smoky grey, over which he would presently draw his well-worn overcoat, which resembled, from continual wear and tear, the once fashionable hue known as mouldy orange; a sage-green necktie, ornamented by large horseshoes in yellow, and a still larger one in silver as a pin, the same tie having been bound into its place in a manner which threatened in time to strangle the wearer if he indulged in any very violent movement of the neck; the whole mass of variegated cloth topped by a peculiarly round-shaped head, on which, owing to a recent immersion in the hand basin, a crop of particularly wiry sandy hair stood up with great determination.

Such was Jerry as he set forth at last to pay the visit which he anticipated with such mixed feelings, which even the state of the weather did not tend to damp. It seemed truly as if, after a short glimpse of spring, the year had either fallen back into winter, or taken a desperate rush forward into autumn.

A high wind was blowing strong and piercing

enough to have whistled and howled under the *régime* of the former, while the steady downpour of rain from a sky covered with heavy threatening clouds told of a spell of bad weather in store, and made it seem dusk even before midday was long past.

Hoisting a shabby but substantial "gamp," and having carefully turned up his trousers round his ankles to save them from the mud, Jerry was soon plodding through the wind and rain towards Wicker's Row.

After about half-an-hour's walking he reached his destination, and rang the bell at Mrs Spicer's.

He had scarcely let go the handle when it was again snatched open, and Sarah's squalid figure, dirtier and more disreputable than on the night before, greeted his vision.

"Oh, you've come, have you?" she said laconically, surveying Jerry from top to toe with something like suspicion written on her expansive countenance.

"Yes," said Jerry cheerfully, determined not to be quenched by any amount of wet blankets, no matter in what shape or form; "I've come."

With that he proceeded to plant his dripping umbrella in the rusty stand and open his coat. It seemed that Sarah was again inclined to revenge some of her wrongs upon the head of any one who happened to be near, but fortunately for Jerry the shrill voice calling "Sarah! Sarah!" interposed.

"All right," she said, in the same sullen tone, which was not at all likely to reach the ears of whoever summoned her. "All right. I'm coming, I'm coming. And now you've come" (to Jerry), "just go straight up four flights of stairs, and knock at the door right before you."

With this she pushed her straggling hair out of her eyes with a dirty hand, thereby adding another smudge to those already ornamenting her face, and disappeared to the lower regions, which, to judge by the never-ceasing sounds of the shrill voice, were hardly as peaceful as they had been the night before.

Although Jerry would have preferred that his arrival should have been announced, as it might take away some of the awkwardness of the meeting, he comforted himself that Lizette expected him, and no doubt was on the watch.

Perhaps, even, she had heard his ring, and was waiting at her door, or even at the top of the stairs. It was only a greeting such as a brother might expect.

Encouraged by this thought, our hero shook himself like a big dog after a run in the rain, and began his ascent of the creaking stairs.

Up, up he went, glancing as he did so between the banisters, as though expecting to see his thoughts fulfilled; but the four flights of stairs were mounted without any interruption, and when he stood before the door Sarah had indicated—this even was shut.

After waiting a moment, either to recover his

breath or courage, he knocked, softly at first ; again, a little louder ; then, in response to what he thought was a low "Come in," entered.

The room was so dark that at first he could only stare blankly before him ; but gradually, as his eyes became used to the dim light, he was able to distinguish the objects which were before him.

These were not many, for at the first glance one saw how scantily the room was furnished. He did not, however, pause to take an inspection, for his attention was arrested by the sound of a voice which made his heart suddenly leap into his throat and beat there in a way which made him stand stock-still for a moment.

It was the voice he had longed to hear, but low and trembling in its tones—not raised in greeting to him, but whispering strange, incoherent words, such as Jerry had once called gibberish.

Half-unconsciously he listened, standing motionless in the darkness, and staring with wondering eyes to where, before a low fire which burnt in the grate ; half-sitting, half-reclining on an old wooden couch, was a slight, dark figure, the face turned away from him, the hands crossed over a mass of white stuff which rested on her knees.

A moment or two he listened, then the figure, which he knew so well, yet was so strangely unfamiliar to him, moved slightly ; and, wondering to see no second person to act as a listener, he went a step or two forward, then paused again.

The voice was still murmuring in that low, uncertain tone in the strange language, not a word

of which he could understand, save one—that one, one which was repeated over and over again, each time with increasing expression—that word a name which was the one which most strongly recalled to his mind his brotherhood.

Over and over again came those unintelligible sentences, broken now and then by that one word of meaning, uttered always in a tone of yearning entreaty which told its own tale.

Presently these wilder utterances ceased abruptly—died away, and in their place came low, moaning sentences, in language which, broken as it was, the listener understood only too well.

“Carl, Carl!” said the voice, quivering out into darkness and silence, “you said you haf love for me once. Is it died? It is soon. I haf said to you, I love you. It was true—it was true. You,” with a great earnestness, “you said you did not think it could be that I haf love for you—but haf I not told you it is—it is? I haf love for you now. Oh, it is not wicked—your love is died—but mine—it is so deep buried here, in my heart—I cannot let it to die. I haf love no one but you. I haf said it and you haf been glad—but now, now what you said is false—all false to me. They say I haf been fool—they laugh—and oh, it is hard—it makes me to feel that one day my love may be like yours and die. I may hate you—and what shall I do then? I haf no one else to love me—no one to care—oh, it is so sad—so long—so lonely. Ah, *mein Gott*, so I have no one in the world—I am so lonely!”

Jerry could stand still no longer. Every sentence coming to him through the silence had fallen on his heart like a blow from a knife; a sudden fear was in his mind, and when that last "it is so lonely" died away in that half-sob, half-sigh which he remembered so well, he sprang forward in the darkness towards the sofa.

Ere he could reach it, the figure upon it had started violently and turned round.

"Who is it?" said the voice, suddenly losing its trembling hesitation and grown shrill with emotion. "Who is it? Say—who—Carl—say it is not—"

By what seemed an effort, the girl raised herself to a standing position, her bundle of work falling to her feet.

Jerry tried to speak, but words would not come; he only put out his arms blindly and closed them round the slight figure, which suddenly losing all power, lay unresisting in his hold.

How long he held it thus, with that fear in his heart getting wilder and wilder, he never knew—never guessed how in the interval, brief as it was, consciousness went and came to the awakened girl, that her acceptance of his support was not voluntary, but merely the natural dependence of the weak on the strong, without which she must have fallen to the ground.

Presently the voice came again in the darkness which hid them both from each other.

"Jerry!"

"Yes, Liz, it's me. I've come to see you. It is you, isn't it?" At the words a flame started up

from among the smouldering ashes in the fireplace, and the girl suddenly slipped as it were from the grasp that held her and sank down on the couch.

As she did so Jerry's eyes rested upon her, and then wore a sudden startled expression.

"What is it?" he said, drawing back a step or two, his own voice harsh with surprise. "Surely there is some mistake, I—"

"Yes, yes, I know," cried the girl. "It is no mistake. It is I, Lizette, only you do not know me. Perhaps you have not heard what— Oh, don't turn away, for God's sake don't turn away. It is I—Lizette. Jerry, for God's sake don't leave me now. Oh, *mein Gott*, is it so bad as this? My heart will break."

And with a cry of bitterness which echoed round the room, the girl flung herself back on the sofa, hiding her face in her hands and sobbing as though her heart was truly breaking.

Jerry stood for a moment dazed by the confusion of ideas which united this voice he knew so well with the face he had caught a glimpse of in the firelight, a face which was so like, yet so unlike to that which had so often smiled at him in his visions and dreams, a strange face which as yet he could not recognise only involuntarily shrink from. Yet the voice was Lizette's, and it was that which called upon him so pitifully not to turn away from her, not to leave her.

Trusting his ears and heart rather than his eyes and senses, Jerry did not wait to think, but the next moment was kneeling, great rough fellow that

he was, beside the low couch, seeking to draw the rigid figure once more to him.

At first the girl resisted, until he said in his voice which too had suddenly become soft and gentle, very unlike his own, "Liz, my girl, it's you, of course it is, only I was a bit confused coming in in the dark, and couldn't see."

It was only his kind honest heart that prompted the words, but it broke the ice, and suddenly the hands were dropped from the face he did not know, that it might rest on his shoulder, while the slight form—oh, so slight now, Jerry could tell in that short moment—clung to him with a fervour which was almost passionate, while great wrenching sobs broke from the heaving breast, and tears, hot, bitter, blinding tears, such as are wrung from a heart which is nigh to bursting, were rained upon the rough shoulder of the ugly yellow coat.

And Jerry?

All in a moment the remembrance of the words to which he had been an unwilling listener, the remembrance of the name by which he had been greeted, as if its owner was the only one in the world who could bring light into the darkness which was closing round this poor wandering soul, all this, and all his other plans were forgotten in that one thought, this was Lizette, he had found her whom he sought, not well and happy as he had pictured her in his dreams, but sick, sad, and lonely, and sorely troubled.

Yes, this was Lizette, and Jerry straightway forgot all else save that one thought, forgot what she

was, and what he was, and putting his strong arms round her, held her to him as though he would never let her go again, held her with her head resting on his breast, while his strong frame trembled so that he could scarcely stand, and the tight grip at his throat grew more and more suffocating as the moments flew by, each marked by the sound of a big sob which wrung his heart.

How long they stood thus he never knew, it seemed hours, and yet but a few seconds, until alarmed by the convulsive quivering of the girl as she clung so wildly to him, he forced himself to try and calm her, fearful of the consequences of such an outburst of grief on one who was apparently so little equal to it.

At first that lump in his throat would not let him say a word, but presently he managed to say jerkily,—

“Cheer up, lass, don’t cry, there’s a good lass. It’s me,—Jerry; I’ve been looking for you such a while, but I’ve found you, and there’s no cause to cry. Come, lass, don’t go on like this; you’ll be hurting yourself, and I shall think it’s all along of me a-coming and taking you by surprise. Don’t cry, Liz, don’t; I’ve come to look after you, and you’ll be all right now with your old friend Jerry. Don’t cry, lass, don’t.”

He went on repeating this entreaty each time with less calmness, till presently, quite forgetting what he did, he drew the head which rested on his shoulder closer to his breast, stroking away with a trembling hand the great big tears which

forced themselves out of the kindly grey-green eyes which had suddenly lost all their sparkle and fun, and grown dim and misty, and fell on the dusky curls which rested on his coat, stroking them away one after another, over and over again repeating his entreaty, and at length stooping his own sandy head and gently and fervently, like a mother would kiss her child, almost reverently he kissed the white drawn cheeks and quivering lips, pouring out in a few words which he could not retain the passionate tenderness which he had in his heart.

Only a few endearing words such as might have had no special meaning but for the tone of quiet earnestness with which they were uttered. The next minute he could have bitten his tongue out for having said them, knowing as he did what mockery they must have sounded. He, however, comforted with the assurance that they had not reached the ears for which, in the heat of the moment, they had been intended, for he became suddenly aware that the sobs had ceased, and Lizette lay passive, almost insensible in his arms.

"What is it?" he asked, in great alarm, bending over her, a sudden fear making his heart stand still.

"Couch—water—faint," were all the words he could catch of those which fell from the pallid lips, and gently, but quickly, he laid her on the couch, and sought about in the darkness until he found a glass of water on a table near.

This he held to her lips, but his hand shook

so that he spilt part of it, which, however, was not wasted. Its cool touch on her neck and face roused Lizette, till little by little she was herself again.

Herself! Alas, even when in answer to Jerry's inquiry she declared such to be the case, Jerry cleared his throat loudly to suppress a sigh at the mockery of the words. How little this Lizette whom he had found resembled she whom he had sought. How long would it be before one would be lost in the other.

Now, however, that she was in a measure recovered, although even then lying back pale and languid upon her hard pillows—now that the pain of the first meeting was over, each felt the necessity of a return to stern reality, which naturally meant no little explanation on either side.

On his part Jerry seemed suddenly to have lost all his self-possession. He sat down on the edge of a low wooden chair and played nervously with his hat, which, in a sudden fit of remembrance, he had just removed from his head. Lizette was now by far the most collected, though perhaps her late agitation had rendered her so weak that she could do nought but accept whatever happened.

There was not very much to tell. Jerry's adventures we are already acquainted with. Lizette's life during the few short weeks which passed since we last saw her had been day after day the same as yesterday, save when sometimes the pains which made it almost impossible for her to endure sometimes, left her free for a little, but this was not

often. Even when it was so, and she was able to look round her a little, she often hailed the return of torture which made it impossible for her to think or even move, with relief, because this bodily pain was to her not half so great as that of her mind.

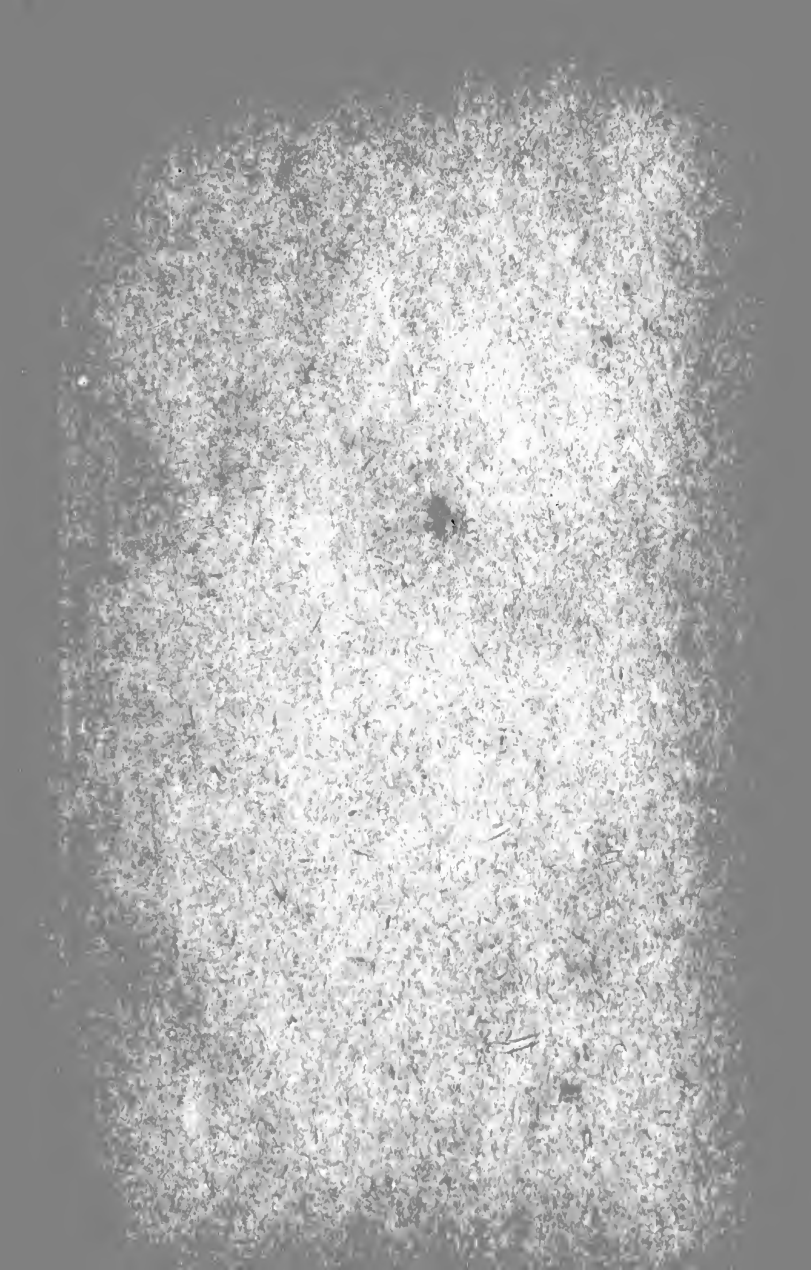
It was not enough that from day to day came that endless struggle to bear a heavy burden, that confusion of ideas which often follows a great sorrow, but before her eyes was ever the knowledge of the helplessness which had been so suddenly thrust upon her, that terrible tormenting question, what was to be their end?

Ah, what great doors hang on little hinges. Could Carl Hermann have known what a double part he was to have played in wrecking the life of his little countrywoman, who, child that she was, had trusted in him so implicitly, surely he would have bitten out his own tongue—cut off his own hand rather than have been the instrument to inflict such two terrible blows on her innocent head. Perhaps it had been a judgment on him—at least so Jerry looked upon it—that he who had wantonly, or at all events wilfully, caused her the first bitter trouble she had known in this life, should have been the one who had been made to stand by and see her narrowly escape an awful death, to survive to the consciousness of life which might be even more terrible, without being able to put out a hand to save her, to see that flower which he had once called so fair, but had nevertheless ruthlessly

flung away for some more gaudy blossom, crushed and torn, till it seemed hardly possible that any man in future would care to waste so much as a glance upon what he had despised.

And if it had been Lizette's death he had been forced to witness instead of that narrow fight for life, surely his punishment would not have been too great.

END OF VOL. II.



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